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MEDIA RELEASE

Work set to begin on giant Pondi Playspace

The Rural City of Murray Bridge is excited to announce that construction will soon begin on the giant Pondi Playspace at Murray Bridge's Sturt Reserve.

The award-winning design, inspired by Ngarrindjeri Dreaming stories, culture, heritage and country - is the flagship riverfront development of a much larger Sturt Reserve Master Plan.

Focused on play, culture, education and community connection, the design has won accolades for its extensive co-design process with Ngarrindjeri Ruwe Empowered Communities (NREC) and leading outdoor design specialists.

The new playspace will replace the more than 20-year-old playground equipment located on our most popular Reserve. It also reflects Council's commitment to its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), celebrating the rich cultural heritage of the Ngarrindjeri community.

This nature-based design will not only include installation of the iconic giant Murray Cod (Pondi) climbing and play structure, but also be flanked by a flying fox, swings, sand play, slides, trampoline and disability accessible play equipment.

The precinct upgrade will include amenities to support visiting families, including sheltered seating, bespoke shade structure, outdoor classroom (circular outdoor seating), soundscape installation, bins, barbecues, drinking fountain, public artworks, lighting and major landscaping improvements.

The project is jointly funded by \$4.85M from the Australian Government's Major and Local Community Infrastructure Program (MLCIP).

Council is providing \$3.45M from its existing infrastructure renewal budget - set aside for the replacement of major community assets that have reached the end of their useful life.

Senator Marielle Smith, Senator for South Australia said: "Murray Bridge is a growing, thriving community which deserves to have world class infrastructure."

"The \$4.85M the Albanese Labor Government is investing in the Pondi Playspace will ensure that families are able to experience world class, state of the art play and learning infrastructure. Importantly, it will also present yet another wonderful reason for tourists to visit this thriving community, while strengthening local jobs and community connections too."

Mayor Wayne Thorley said this project will transform the reserve into a destination and the renewal of this worn-out playground was well overdue.

"The Pondi Playspace project is something we can all be proud of here in Murray Bridge," Mayor Thorley said.

"We talk a lot with our community about connection and wellbeing. This project sets a benchmark for creating spaces that bring these together."

“Not only will it become the place that local families meet and children play, but this design considers all ages, connects us to our Ngarrindjeri culture and makes a statement about how much we value our iconic riverfront precinct.

“Reserve and riverfront upgrades like this help us bring more people to Murray Bridge as well, supporting our goals for growth in the tourism economy.

“We’re grateful to the Australian Government for its major contribution, and to our Ngarrindjeri leaders who partnered with us to design this playspace.”

Chief Executive Officer Heather Barclay said this was an incredible milestone in the broader plans for Sturt Reserve.

“As a Council, we’ve listened to our community, who have made it clear just how important Sturt Reserve is to them and the special place it has for our local families,” Ms Barclay said.

“At the same time, Council is working on an ambitious plan to activate our riverfront space alongside regional growth.

“This project allows us to do both, and we’ve worked hard behind the scenes to secure federal funding for this project, allowing us to continue delivering these important upgrades.

“It will provide a place that supports the wellbeing and social connection of our local community, while also giving a boost to the business and tourism economy.”

NREC Chief Executive Officer Margi Sumner said the Pondi Playspace represents an important acknowledgement of Ngarrindjeri people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the River Murray, Lower Lakes, Coorong, Southern Fleurieu and Hills region.

“From the outset, this project has been guided by Ngarrindjeri Elders and community members to ensure that the cultural stories, design elements and interpretation of Pondi are respectful, authentic and true to Ngarrindjeri culture, knowledge and connection to Country,” Ms Sumner said.

“This project demonstrates what can be achieved when local government and First Nations people work together from the beginning of the process, rather than seeking endorsement after decisions have already been made. The co-design approach adopted by the Rural City of Murray Bridge has enabled genuine partnership, shared learning and mutual respect throughout the development of this significant community asset.”

The project also includes demolition of existing structures, site preparation and earthworks, installation of stormwater systems, hydraulic equipment, electrical and lighting upgrades, footpaths, paved areas and more.

Council will go to tender in the coming months for the construction contracts, with a goal to begin works later this year.

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