

TARWIN RIVER PRECINCT PROJECT

In August 2018 the Venus Bay Community Centre developed an issues paper to summarise the results of different community consultation sessions in relation to the Tarwin River Precinct. This paper highlighted that need for detailed research and further discussion about key projects, so that they could be documented into a Strategic Plan for the area.

The VBCC applied for and was successful in receiving funding in the form of a South Gippsland Shire Community Grant for a Planning and Development Project. Michelle Harris has been appointed to undertake this study, as she has had extensive experience undertaking projects across South Gippsland including the development of a Master Plan for the Tarwin Lower Recreation Reserve and the Tower Lower Mechanics Institute Hall in recent years.

The area being reviewed as part of this plan included the Tarwin Lower River Precinct, from the toilet block at the jetty, along the Tarwin River through the town to the fish platform areas at the town entry. The project will consider issues including but not limited too; parking areas, impact to or removal of vegetation, maintenance of existing infrastructure and signage.

The project is just getting underway and we would like the community to think about;

- Why is the Tarwin River Precinct important to them, the broader community and visitors?
- What infrastructure improvements or changes are needed?
- What values need to be protected / preserved?

Extensive consultation will commence in January with local community organisations and stakeholders. Community members are encouraged to register their interest by contacting Michelle Harris on email – handsonsm1@bigpond.com or phone 0458 145 596.

We will then make contact with you in regards to community consultation opportunities. Once the initial research is complete, a community meeting will be planned to discuss the key themes and how best to involve the community moving forward.



Issues paper, August 2018 Project Background

The Tarwin River is a natural asset for the townships of Tarwin Lower and Venus Bay as well as surrounding districts. It is the gateway into the coastal town of Venus Bay that sees over 8,000 seasonal visitors per day, all of whom drive through the service town of Tarwin Lower. The river connects the twin towns that have different flavours but remain co-dependent.

Shops and businesses line one side of the street, the river banks and park area are adjacent.

To date, there has been no strategic plan or approach to the management and beautification of the river environment in Tarwin Lower. There have been some capital improvements in terms of

pedestrian path, however this is not an integrated system of pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The pathway ends in a veranda at the Tarwin Hotel. There is a bicycle pathway between Venus Bay and Tarwin Lower; this ends in the parking area near boat ramp. There is no designated pathway that links the actual township and business of Tarwin Lower.

Based on feedback from 2 separate community meetings, along with conversations with community members, business owners and environmental groups it appears there is a need to address the many factors that may influence a master plan and strategic approach to enhancing and preserving the natural beauty of the river whilst addressing visitor management issues such as parking and passive community space.

The issues

- Lack of designated pathway between end of bicycle track and actual township facilities in Tarwin Lower.
- Degradation of river bank area due to inappropriate parking, wearing away at ground surface and impacting on tree roots.
- Local businesses have limited parking to cater for peak seasons or community events, such as market held near
- Mechanics Institute Hall 6 times per year.
- No designated parking areas on river side of road
- Preservation of river vegetation impacted by little opportunity to view river, causing people to create their own tracks.
- Vegetation management difficult due to access issues, rubbish caught up in reeds
- Viewing/fishing platforms have been created outside the town, however these don't cater for viewing areas within the town
- River platform walk was removed and not replaced.
- Road has significant traffic volume, particularly in peak season. Side of road is a defacto bus stop for school buses; children crossing roads to and from bus.
- Limited signage to indicate environmental values of the area
- Lack of sightlines of major tourism and local attraction; cannot see the river from the township
- Potential indigenous cultural significance of the river area
- CFA station located on river, along with associated infrastructure (tank etc.)
- Tennis courts located on the river area

The Tarwin Lower – Venus Bay Community Directions plan was created in 2012 and has had one desktop review in 2015. A current review has been initiated in 2017 however has not been completed.

This project will go some way to engage the community in the broader picture of the plan and help to identify new champions and groups interested in working together to achieve shared aims.

There are many community members, community groups and government agencies that are stakeholders in this process.

Various groups hold strong ideas of what they would like to see; some of these are opposing. A method of teasing out the issues with all stakeholders in the form of a master plan will form the basis on which the community can advocate for and champion a shared response to the improvement and preservation of a significant environmental asset. All voices will be represented; a creative common ground approach is the ideal outcome of this project.