

---

### Meeniyan - get ready for a bird's eye view

Twitchers (that's bird watchers to the uninitiated) visiting South Gippsland are set to flock to Meeniyan's Rail Trail this year for a glimpse of wonderful waterfowl.

And it's all thanks to a community partnership between the Meeniyan Progress Association and South Gippsland Water.

South Gippsland Water Managing Director Philippe du Plessis said that the new bird viewing area currently under construction would showcase the diverse wildlife attracted to the Meeniyan Wastewater Treatment Plant wetlands.

"When we constructed the treatment plant, we included these innovative wetlands as a final treatment process. The wetlands consist of four lagoons, a duckweed pond, two wetland storages and a macrophyte pond," he said.

"The system is planted with locally Indigenous species to lower the nutrient content, suspended solids and any pathogen concentration. We then surrounded the lagoons with a fox-proof fence, creating a haven for birdlife."

"Right next to the Great Southern Rail Trail, the bird viewing area at the wetlands will be perfectly positioned for walkers and cyclists to share the joy of seeing the range of bird species amongst the revegetated habitat."

Community member Clive Hope, as Secretary of the Meeniyan Progress Association, and former Rail Trail committee member Kerry Baggally, helped bring this project to life. Clive said the raised bird hide, just under a metre high and about four metres wide, will be a great addition to the Meeniyan section of the Great Southern Rail Trail.

"When it's complete the hide will provide shelter, benches and information about our local birds and the treatment lagoons and process. It will be accessible by walking or riding along the Rail Trail and have ramp access," Clive said.

In keeping with the Rail Trail as a pedestrian and cycling experience, for people's safety and in keeping with the quiet and contemplative nature of the site, please note there is no vehicle access to the area.

Toora construction company Hilder Homes Construction is finalising construction of the hide over the next few weeks, with a view to an opening celebration in March 2021.

South Gippsland Water officially opened the \$6.2 million Meeniyan Wastewater Treatment Plant in 2012. Driven by another local partnership, the Sewer Meeniyan Action Committee (SMAC), the plant is a series of lagoons that filter waste before returning water for reuse in suitable places nearby such as the racecourse, golf club and recreation reserve.