

Media Release

Steve Dimopoulos MP

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events
Minister for Creative Industries



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ECHUCA TO WELCOME NEW LUXURY PADDLESTEAMER

The Andrews Labor Government is backing Australia's first five-star river cruise experience, drawing more visitors to Victoria's stunning river country and supporting more jobs and local businesses.

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Steve Dimopoulos today visited Murray River Paddlesteamers in Echuca to announce the new paddlesteamer project, supported with a \$2.25 million investment through the Labor Government's *Regional Tourism Investment Fund*.

The state-of-the-art paddlesteamer coined the 'PS Australian Star' will offer guests a unique stay, with 20 ensuite cabins, a fine dining restaurant and function space, along with a lounge and bars across two levels.

Built locally in Mildura and operating from Echuca, the vessel will cater for up to 40 guests and offer visitors a luxury cruise along the Murray for up to seven nights, paired with the opportunity to explore riverside communities.

Murray River Paddlesteamers will provide passengers with a variety of local tourism experiences including silo art tours, supporting local businesses throughout the Echuca region.

The project will generate 13 local jobs during construction and a further 19 ongoing employment positions when fitting out of the vessel is complete. The PS Australian Star is expected to begin cruising along the Murray River in late 2024.

Supporting a 'do more and stay longer' regional ethos, the experience will increase the average length of visitor stays on current cruises to 4.5 nights and boost the average guest spend to \$1,180 per night.

Tourism is big business in Echuca, with the Campaspe Local Government Area welcoming 1.2 million visitors who spent approximately \$326 million in the year ending December 2019.

The *Regional Tourism Investment Fund* is helping entice more visitors to Victoria's regions, driving private investment and accelerating the recovery of the tourism sector.

Quote attributable to Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Steve Dimopoulos

"Victoria's river country is already a compelling destination to visitors from across the world, and this latest attraction will draw even more visitors, support the communities that call them home and create more jobs."

Quote attributable to Murray River Paddlesteamers Managing Director Rohan Burgess

"We are grateful for the Government's trust and investment in our new vessel, and we are very excited to expand our operation and offer this new experience on the Murray River soon."

Quotes attributable to Murray Regional Tourism Interim CEO Will Flamsteed

"This development will further enhance the Murray River's luxury cruise offerings and will encourage more overnight stays to this beautiful region."

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