



**REGIONAL  
RAIL REVIVAL**

**GIPPSLAND**



## Gippsland Line Upgrade

The new bridge over the Avon River is part of the Gippsland Line Upgrade, which will enable more frequent and reliable services for passengers by duplicating track, extending the Morwell crossing loop, upgrading level crossings and signalling, and adding second platforms at four stations on the line.

The Australian and Victorian governments have invested more than \$4 billion in the Regional Rail Revival program, which is upgrading every regional passenger rail line in Victoria and creating jobs and supplier opportunities.

# Community update

SUMMER 2021

## Thank you Stratford

Trains are now travelling at higher speeds on the new Avon River bridge, which was completed in December 2020, three months ahead of schedule.

The new bridge was completed during a nine-day construction blitz in early December, with crews working more than 7,000 hours - around the clock - to connect it to the rail line.

The nearby McAlister Street level crossing has also been upgraded, boosting safety for passengers, motorists and pedestrians. We coordinated these works with the new pedestrian path being installed on McAlister Street delivered by Wellington Shire Council.

Acclaimed artist Ray Thomas has completed a 25-metre long mural on the side of the new bridge,

featuring the community's chosen theme: the Avon River.

The mural honours the Brayakaulung clan and their connection to the Avon River and features Gunaikurnai ancestral totems and cultural practices including scarred canoe trees, stone grinding grooves and bush foods.

We're now busy landscaping the areas around the new bridge and building the improvements to Apex Park you helped us to design.

Thanks to the participation of the local community throughout 2020, we've been able to incorporate the views of more than 400

people into the design of the new nature-based playground and BMX/pump track.

The improvements to Apex Park will be completed in the coming months, creating a fun and challenging new play space for the local community and visitors alike.

Thank you to everyone in Stratford and surrounding communities for your ongoing support and patience while we finalise these works.



Australian Government

**BUILDING OUR FUTURE**



# Co-designing Apex Park

As part of the project to build a new rail bridge over the Avon River, we wanted to involve the Stratford community in designing the new improvements to Apex Park to create a legacy for the community.

To do this, we developed an engagement process founded on the co-design principles of accessibility and inclusiveness to ensure the community, and especially children, had genuine input into the design of the park.

We asked the community to help us co-design the following improvements to Apex Park:

- A new BMX/pump track
- A new public artwork
- A new nature-based playground
- Selecting the plants that will be planted around the park.

## Phase 1 – You told us your ideas

Early in 2020, we heard from Stratford locals who voted on the types of equipment they wanted included in the new nature-based playground and key features for the BMX/pump track.

We asked for feedback via:

- A community day at Apex Park
- An online survey
- School voting with the two local primary schools.

Over the course of our community engagement, we heard from more than 400 people, including more than 200 local primary school students, who provided feedback that was used to develop a concept design for the park upgrades and select a theme for the public artwork.

We also engaged the Avon Landcare Group and local nurseries to help us choose the best plant species and locations for the extensive vegetation that will be planted around the park.

### Why a nature-based playground?

Nature-based play areas encourage exploration and interaction for children of different ages and abilities. A nature and adventure play focus was chosen due to the playground's proximity to the Avon River and native vegetation which Wellington Shire Council and the community supported.





## Phase 2 – We showed you our draft plan

Midway through last year, we asked the community for feedback on the concept design we'd developed using their input, to ensure the design reflected the community's ideas and aspirations for the park.

Due to coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, this phase of our engagement was undertaken online. We engaged with locals through a dedicated online engagement portal which included an interactive online map, 3D renders, videos and an online survey. We provided a range of resources and remote learning activities to the local primary schools, and held a series of webinars.

Hard copies of the concept design and survey were also available to ensure everyone could view and provide feedback on the draft design.

We received more than 100 responses and used this feedback to finalise the design.





Key historic dates which were developed in consultation with the Stratford Historical Society

Early images of agricultural practices and a train travelling over the bridge

Images of local families at the Avon River

Borun & Tuk journey Creation story

Gunnai Elder

## Public artwork

Acclaimed Gunaikurnai artist Ray Thomas and his son Tirilli Thomas have painted a mural on the wall of the new rail bridge. The mural celebrates the local history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous connections to the Avon River, a theme selected by the community in early 2020.

The mural honours the traditional custodians – the Brayakaulung clan – and their connection to Dooyeedang (the Avon River). The artwork includes ancestral totems, Borun the Pelican and Tuk the Female Musk Duck, through to post-contact history and early European settlement in the area, referencing Ray's own family history and the Ramahyuck Aboriginal Mission near Stratford.

Ray's mural celebrates the river as a vital source of community life over changing seasons and times.

Ray was selected to deliver the artwork by a Creative Advisory Panel, which included representatives from Creative Victoria, Wellington Shire Council and Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation. Ray worked closely with the Stratford Historical Society to research the local stories represented on the mural.

We encourage you to visit Apex Park and have a look at Stratford's exciting new mural.

## Thank you

We would like to thank you for your feedback and involvement in co-designing Apex Park.

A special shout-out to students from Stratford Primary School and St Patrick's Primary School for their expert help in designing the new playground and BMX/pump track; to the Avon Landcare Group for its guidance with the park's revegetation; and to the Stratford Historical Society for its assistance with the mural.

We look forward to celebrating the opening of the new and improved Apex Park with the community in the coming months.

## We want your feedback on the co-design process



You can visit our website and complete an online survey at [regionalrailrevival.vic.gov.au/gippsland](https://regionalrailrevival.vic.gov.au/gippsland) or you can complete the attached survey and return it to our site office using the letterbox at 34 McFarlane Street, Stratford by **Sunday 21 February**.

Follow the progress on the rest of the Gippsland Line Upgrade on our new Facebook page at [facebook.com/RRRGippsland](https://facebook.com/RRRGippsland)

## More information

To find out more about Regional Rail Revival:

[regionalrailrevival.vic.gov.au](https://regionalrailrevival.vic.gov.au)

1800 105 105 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Rail Projects Victoria  
PO Box 4509, Melbourne, VIC 3001



Interpreter Service (03) 9209 0147

It should be noted that this information is current at the time of printing, however due to unforeseen circumstances, changes may occur. Please visit [regionalrailrevival.vic.gov.au](https://regionalrailrevival.vic.gov.au) for the latest updates.



# Final design

## Phase 3 – Your park as designed by you

We have now finalised the design of the new nature-based playground and BMX/pump track. Construction is underway and is scheduled for completion in the coming months.

### Harmony flowers

Harmony flowers are interactive flowers that sing when struck. This item was chosen by Stratford Primary School and St. Patrick's Primary School students to replace the talking tubes that were removed from the design due to community feedback regarding coronavirus (COVID-19) hygiene.

### Accessible spinner

Ensuring the park is accessible to all children was a high priority for Stratford locals. The accessible spinner will allow wheelchair access for inclusive play.

### Balance bar, logs and rocks

Balancing logs and fallen climbing logs are for balance, agility and exploration. This item was voted third-most popular. We heard that this kind of play inspires children's imagination and develops balance in a different way.

### Climbing rope course

The ropes course was the most popular piece of play equipment. The children of Stratford told us that they enjoy climbing at Apex Park and requested more challenging climbing ropes, which have been incorporated into the design. The new ropes course provides climbing, scrambling and balancing for all skill levels.

### Nature-based playground



### BMX/pump track



The BMX/pump track was a hit with the community, especially local children. You told us to include plenty of rollers, jumps and corners and supported the inclusion of circuits for beginner, intermediate and advanced riders. The track also has a start/finish line as requested by the local children.

In addition to bike riders, the design accommodates a variety of users of different ages and abilities including skateboarders, scooter riders and rollerbladers.



### Seating

We had several requests for additional seating to be included in the final design.

Included in the new sheltered areas are seating platforms and concrete walls which will provide opportunities for informal seating and hangout areas to allow viewing of both the BMX/pump track and the playground.

### Shelters

Providing additional sheltered areas to Apex Park was important to Stratford locals. The shelters have been oriented so that one shelter looks out over the playground and another over the BMX/pump track.

### Basket swing

The basket swing was the second-most popular item. The children of Stratford made sure the basket swing could fit more than one person.

### Amenities

There were requests for more bins and a water fountain in Apex Park which has been included in the final design.

### Vegetation

We engaged Avon Landcare Group and social enterprise Moogji Aboriginal Council East Gippsland to develop and design the vegetation in Apex Park. Indigenous plants will improve the environment surrounding Apex Park, the new bridge and the Avon River.