

Transforming the Yarra River in a Digital World

iPhone Application highlights foresight of architects, planners and urban designers

A multimedia walking tour website and iPhone Application called Transforming the Yarra was launched yesterday in Melbourne.

It was officially launched by the Victorian Premier John Brumby along with the unveiling of a plaque honouring former Planning Minister Evan Walker and Secretary of the Ministry of Planning David Yencken in recognition of their instrumental roles in the transformation.

The iPhone Application, developed by WSP Digital is available for download on the Apple App Store, or through the Major Project Victoria website.

The Transforming the Yarra iPhone Application allows users to interactively take the tour, integrating into the phone's mapping and GPS capabilities to guide the user through different audio chapters on location. Alternatively users can manually guide themselves through the audio, image and textual content of each chapter.

The Yarra River is a landmark that attracts a diverse range of views and opinions, from ecologists, planners, polluters, designers and the public in general.

It is a watercourse whose pristine headwaters high up in the Upper Yarra catchment, have been compromised with each metre it flows closer to Melbourne's metropolis. The Yarra is much-loved river that has sacrificed much in the name of urban and industrial development .

A regeneration commenced under the helm of the Cain Government in the early 1980s signalled a much more positive phase for the Yarra River, its visitors, neighbours and nearby commercial occupants.

Sustained effort by Governments, industry and the community, is gradually delivering a River that the community appreciates, uses and protects. Much of this effort can be traced back to the visionary work initiated by the Cain Government's Planning and Environment Minister, Professor, The Honourable Evan Walker AO and his departmental secretary Professor David Yencken AO. Their plan saw the development of the South Bank and set out the strategy for landscaped promenades lined by public buildings, restaurants and open spaces filled with art.

The foresight of Walker and Yencken, together with the multitude of architects, urban designers, landscape architects and planners, has been given life through the revitalised places and precincts that Melburnians and tourists can easily navigate by foot, bike or watercraft.

From Birrarung Marr and Federation Square through to South Bank and South Wharf, the environmental and cultural qualities enhanced through the Yarra's resurrection are worthy of documentation, albeit in a format relevant to the digital age and proliferating mobile devices.

Transforming the Yarra has also been developed a resource for Victorian schools in the areas of humanities, history, geography, art, communications and civics.

Transforming the Yarra is an initiative of Arts Victoria, State of Design Festival, Major Project Victoria, City of Melbourne, DIIRD, Department of Premier and Cabinet, and the Office of the Victorian Government Architect.

WSP Environment & Energy is actively involved in advancing the role of good design and eco-innovation, as part of this year's State of Design Victoria Festival.

The Digital solutions team from WSP Environment & Energy is proud to have been the development partner of the Transforming the Yarra iPhone App, produced as part of this year's State of Design Victoria Festival.

WSP Digital solutions can be found at: www.wspdigital.com

The Transforming the Yarra iPhone App is now available on the Apple AppStore.

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