



Merri River School in Action

Key Priority Area: **Active Recreation**

Type of Funding: **Active Schools**

School Overview:	Merri River School is the educational home to 170 students with varying degrees of intellectual disability and behavioural issues. A significant percentage of the students also have physical disabilities. The school is the only Special School in the area and services a 50km radial area from Warrnambool. With the school moving to a brand new 17-acre riverside campus in 2020, a wonderful opportunity has arisen to extend its current Physical Education program to include Outdoor Education with an extended focus on Environmental and Sustainability programs.
Project Goal:	To provide a safe risk-taking environment for the students to build confidence in a non-competitive setting. The schools SWPBS will benefit from the program by creating less Physical Education related behavioural incidents as a result of the Outdoor Education program being non-competitive.

The school is situated alongside the Merri River which is one of two major river systems in Warrnambool. The school campus boasts approximately 200m of river frontage and is perfect for a range of recreational activities. The Outdoor Education program aims to fulfill the needs of an active classroom and promote active recreation. The biggest focus for Merri River School has been the development of their Outdoor Education Program to encourage an increase in physical activity and movement.



The Active Schools Grant has supported opportunities for students to explore their local environment through participation in many Outdoor Education pursuits that the school has not previously been able to provide. The school is also able to transport students to nearby beaches, mountain bike tracks and hiking trails. The school has used the money to purchase several kayaks and life-vests to support their Outdoor Education program as well as a Bike Education trailer that is utilised to access many of the amazing riding trails available in the local area. The school is also focusing on building a low ropes course in the near future in the hope that students will be able to access this challenge-based



activity any time of the day, without the need of teacher support.

Active School Strategy	Impact
Environment: To offer a diverse range of non-competitive Outdoor Education and recreational activities by using the natural environment on offer to the school.	<i>Access to the Merri River and the many different bike tracks around Warrnambool has allowed the staff to increase the number of non-competitive programs available to the students. This has seen an increase in the number of students partaking in programs.</i>
Equipment: To increase opportunities for Outdoor Education experiences and recreational activities by providing equipment accessible to staff and students.	<i>The bike trailer which has been used by many members of staff, both within and outside of the Outdoor Education program, has resulted in students access to quality riding experiences in many different environments.</i>
Program Delivery: To increase opportunities for Outdoor Education experiences and recreational activities by developing a safe and inclusive program.	<i>A consistent Outdoor Education program has been developed that allows students to explore and embrace new and exciting movement experiences. Students have pushed themselves out of their 'comfort zones' in a non-competitive environment and the new kayaks have been utilised through the school from Year 4-12.</i>
Staff Professional Development: To increase teacher capacity to deliver a range of outdoor education based extracurricular activities	<i>Merri River School has been able to increase staff competence and confidence to deliver non-competitive OE and recreational activities. Bike Education sessions have been run across the whole school and ensured the sustainability of the program as well as blocked canoeing sessions throughout the year.</i>