

Harriet Shing MP

MEMBER FOR EASTERN VICTORIA REGION



Media Release

EMBARGOED UNTIL 1.15 PM WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2016

Gippsland Lakes Welcome Back the Birds

Gippsland's iconic Lakes are 'welcoming back the birds' to help educate the next generation of Victorians about the region's environmental values for migratory birds.

The Welcome Back the Birds event is helping to raise awareness about migratory bird species returning to the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site and it also highlights the unique habitat and environments for which the lakes are internationally recognised.

Member for Eastern Victoria Harriet Shing MP today attended the event with more than 50 Gippsland students to see firsthand the wonderful array of birdlife that is drawn to the area from all over the world.

Ms Shing also announced that \$10 million in funding from the Andrews Labor Government over four years will support work to protect and improve the health of the Gippsland Lakes. The funding was allocated in the *2015-16 Victorian Budget* as part of statewide funding to improve the health of water ways and catchments.

Students at the event took part in round-robin style activities before a boat trip to observe bird populations and learn more about migratory birds and the importance of making and keeping the Gippsland Lakes healthy now and into the future.

Every year more than 20 species of migratory waterbirds visit the Gippsland Lakes as part of their lifecycle. The Lakes provide an important feeding and resting place for these migratory birds, most of which breed in the northern hemisphere. They rely on a healthy Lakes system for their survival during our summer.

The Gippsland Lakes are at times home to Bar-tailed Godwits, a migratory species that travel over 12,000 kilometres from Alaska and Siberia to the Gippsland Lakes.

Ms Shing acknowledged the enormous environmental, historical and educational value of the Gippsland Lakes and highlighted the importance of protecting them for future generations to enjoy, particularly given the deep connection that Traditional Owners share with the area.

The recently appointed Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee is overseeing the expenditure of funding allocated in the *2015-16 Victorian Budget* to improve the health of the Lakes, guided by the existing regional waterway strategies for East and West Gippsland and the new *Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan*.

The plan was developed by the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, in consultation with the community, and is the blueprint for managing the Lakes over the next eight years.

For more information on the Gippsland Lakes see www.loveourlakes.net.au

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Quotes attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria, Harriet Shing:

"This is a great opportunity to raise awareness of a stunning and important natural resource that plays a central role for migratory bird life from all over the world."

"The Lakes are internationally recognised for their environmental, social, cultural and recreational significance - this funding, support and recognition will enable further work to be done at a local level to restore and preserve them for future generations."

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