

MEDIA RELEASE

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Mitchell River's 'bridge to bridge' circuit taps into water refill station drive

Participants in this Sunday's (14 June) *Foundation Five Walk or Run* event around Bairnsdale's Mitchell River will be amongst the first to reap the benefits of new 'Choose Tap' branded water refill stations installed as part of a region-wide healthy lifestyle drive.

Provided jointly by East Gippsland Water, Riviera Triathlon Club and East Gippsland Shire Council, it marks the realisation of a major goal of the triathlon club to help meet the needs of the many walkers and joggers using the 'bridge to bridge' circuit.

With this in mind two of the new refill stations have just been installed at Lind Bridge and next to the Howitt Park footbridge. A third will be added shortly at the Port of Bairnsdale.

Free to use, each station is equipped with a bubble tap that is wheelchair accessible, a drink bottle filling point and a dog bowl – making them ideal for keeping hydrated. Those who stand to benefit from the facilities include walkers and runners who regularly use the circuit, as well as visitors to the Port of Bairnsdale and those attending the monthly Howitt Park Market.

The aim of 'Choose Tap', originally developed by Yarra Valley Water in Melbourne, is to encourage the community to drink tap water in preference to bottled water and soft drinks, as part of a healthy lifestyle. This also makes financial and environmental sense.

In Australia there has been an increasing tendency in recent years to drink pre-packaged, bottled water instead of tap water, which makes no financial sense. Indeed, Australians currently spend more than \$500 million each year on bottled water, needlessly bypassing much cheaper water supplied direct to the tap in their own homes.

Locally the 'Choose Tap' initiative is being driven forward by East Gippsland Water, working in partnership with community groups and East Gippsland Shire Council.

Said East Gippsland Water's Chairperson, Joe Rettino: "Our desire from the outset has been to work closely with the community, including the various local groups and the Council on what is a very worthwhile program. I'm delighted in this particular instance that it also brings to fruition a major long term dream held by the Riviera Triathlon Club who have been a key driver.

"By installing water refill stations in recreational areas we are making tap water even more accessible and encouraging people to reuse and refill their drink bottles. This is much more environmentally friendly than using pre-packaged bottled water, where the plastic used is often unsuitable for recycling, with many bottles ending up at landfill and also left as litter."

More follows/...

East Gippsland Water has also worked with the Howitt Park Management Committee to provide a water refill station close to the sports ovals and pavilion at Howitt Park. Those who stand to benefit from this facility include the many players of all ages participating in the regular soccer competitions hosted by the park, as well as those taking part in Little Athletics events, rowing, and cyclists using the nearby East Gippsland Rail Trail.

Additional communities being targeted over coming months with 'Choose Tap' water refill stations include Newlands Arm, Nicholson, Lakes Entrance, Orbost, Mallacoota and Omeo, with others set to follow.

Ends

NOTE TO EDITORS: There will be a photo opportunity to mark the installation of the water refill stations at 10am, Sunday 14 June, adjacent to footbridge in Howitt Park. Attending will some Foundation Five participants along with: East Gippsland Water Board Director, Eric Sjerp; Riviera Triathlon Club President, John Morton; and, East Gippsland Shire Council's Deputy Mayor Cr Michael Freshwater.