$2.80

# The Guardian

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**NEW BUILD AWAITS MRI**



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VOTE FOR SWAN HILL

VICTORIAN TOP TOURISM TOWN FINALIST 2026



Brendan Harvey and Mayor Stuart King marked the milestone by cutting the ribbon. Picture: Louis Harrison

# What a Gem

**Louis Harrison**

LOCAL residents came together on the Murray River bank for the Pioneer Settlement's Paddle Steamer Gem's 150th Birthday celebrations on Wednesday.

Regarded as the 'Queen of the Murray', The Gem played an important role in shaping the region's history.

Among attendance were Pioneer Settlement volunteers, community members, councillors and paddle-steamer enthusiasts.

Swan Hill Rural City Council Mayor Stuart King said the anniversary was an important opportunity to celebrate a treasured historic attraction.

"For 150 years, the Gem has captured the imagination of visitors and locals alike, and we are proud to celebrate this incredible milestone with the community," Cr King said.

Director of Development and Planning Michelle Grainger said the afternoon tea provided an opportunity to reflect on the vessel's history.

"The PS Gem has played many roles over the years - from passenger vessel to restaurant and museum entrance - and remains one of the most recognisable paddle steamers on the Murray," she said.

Official proceedings featured speeches from Cr King and Brendan Harvey, the Master Shipwright responsible for the restorations.

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# FLIGHT LEASE BACKED

**Peter Bannan**

A LONG-term lease for a flight training academy at the Swan Hill Aerodrome has moved a step closer, with council backing a proposal that could keep the operator on site for up to 30 years.

Swan Hill Rural City Council considered a request from the Sport Aviation Flight Academy to secure a new lease over council-owned land, allowing it to continue operating and invest in upgrades to its training facilities.

It's not the same flight academy that proposed in 2020 to train up to 200 cadet pilots in Swan Hill.

The proposal caused widespread community backlash and was eventually dumped.

Director of corporate services Stephen Fernando told councillors the academy had occupied the site since 2008 and was now seeking longer-term security to justify further investment.

"The proponent has advised that a longer-term lease is sought to provide certainty to invest in the facility and continue operating the flight training academy," Mr Fernando said.

He said the proposed improvements included upgrades to pilot training amenities, including air conditioning, improved lighting and upgrades to the concrete floor.

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**weather** 16°

**Swan Hill** Showers — Cloudy. High chance of showers, most likely in the late morning and afternoon.

| Sat | Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14° | 14° | 15° | 15° | 14° |




