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Media Release

TESTING THE WATERS FOR A CLEANER FUTURE

Residents of the mid-lower Yarra catchment have been called on to help local students investigate the health of Melbourne's most important river.

MYRiveR Yarra is holding a Community Contribution Day this Sunday, where members of the public have the chance to take part in water and habitat testing of the Yarra River and its tributaries.

Tests will be conducted at three different sites along the Yarra at Dights Falls, Yarra Bend Park on Sunday, August 26. It will mark the first time that tests for E-coli in Melbourne's waterways will be carried out by members of the public.

MYRiveR Yarra is a bold concept that sets the goal of engaging young people and their communities throughout the Yarra River basin in informed, active and empowered volunteer participation. It is based on OzGREEN's Eureka Award winning program that has been running in Murray-Darling basin since 2002.

The program is a collaboration between OzGREEN, Environment Victoria, and the Yarra Riverkeeper Association. MYRiveR Yarra is supported by the Department for Victorian Communities Volunteer Support Grants.

Further water tests of the mid-lower Yarra catchment will be carried out by secondary students from local schools on Monday and Tuesday.

After studying the results, the students will determine the issues facing the Yarra catchment that are of most concern to them, vision how they'd like things to be in the future, and decide what individual actions they will take.

They will present this information to a youth-led community forum at the Computershare Conference room, 452 Johnston St, Abbotsford on Friday 31st August, between 3pm and 5pm.

The Yarra provides about 69 per cent of Melbourne's water supplies, but OzGREEN CEO Sue Lennox said the river was stressed by drought and the impact of urban living.

"We expect the tests will show a whole gamut of issues with the Yarra," Ms Lennox said.

"This Community Contribution Day is an opportunity for members of the community to get out and experience the testing themselves and help with the data collection and the investigation of what's going on.

"The main focus of the program is engaging youth passion and voice and commitment, and then following up their capacity to work as agents of change to help bring the river back to life."

Family and friends are invited to bring a picnic lunch, and hear and contribute stories about the Yarra River.

Test sites and times:

10.30am to 3pm - Merri Creek mouth and up and down stream on Yarra River.

For interview: Wendy Hopkins, OzGREEN project coordinator, on 9341 8104 or 0409 670 395.

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