



MEDIA RELEASE

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Meet the Huon's first augmented reality (AR) platypus and enter our competition

A new augmented reality ("AR") experience has just arrived at Geeveston Visitor Centre, allowing people to get up close to one of the Huon's most unusual and difficult-to-find creatures.

Part of a broader project being formed across Tasmania, the Huon Platypus AR Project is possible because of the teamwork of local developers Handbuilt Creative and Huon Valley Council. The project has been jointly funded by the Huon Valley Council and the Department of State Growth.

It is one of a series of unique user experiences that Handbuilt Creative have created. The Handbuilt Creative team have worked with a number of local government and regional tourism organisations to bring Tasmania's unique stories to life.

Hours of painstaking work has gone into the creation of the platypus display, which allows you to see the real-life behaviours of this fascinating creature in a duplication of an Australian riverbank recreational scene.

Using a handheld digital device, like an iPad, the user can zoom in to see how the platypus swims and navigates the flows of the river, shifts and shovels the gravel for food, and secretly returns to its burrow, just as it would in the wild.

At a launch event at Geeveston Visitor Centre on Wednesday 11 September 2019, representatives from the organisations behind the project spoke about its creation and how other AR experiences are being installed across southern Tasmania, offering more opportunities for visitors to get involved. Following a demonstration of the installation, Huon Valley Council Mayor Bec Enders and David Shering of Handbuilt Creative together cut the ceremonial ribbon, officially launching the display for public enjoyment.

Cr Enders said the Huon Valley Council is excited to bring new technologies to the Huon Valley, not only to help boost tourism but also for our community to enjoy.

"Huon Valley Council staff and our friends at Handbuilt Creative have put an enormous amount of effort and care into this project, so it's fantastic to see this collaboration come to fruition. The display is very real and impressive. We are confident it will become a highlight attraction for the area," Cr Enders said.

"We are looking forward to seeing and hearing the public response to the display. An important aspect of the experience is that it encourages people to then head out for some

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real-world exploration, which draws people's attention to our greatest asset – our natural environment.

"It also offers people of all abilities to get up close and see how platypus behave in the wild."

Handbuilt Creative's founder, David Shering, detailed his thoughts on the experience: "The vast majority of people passing through Geeveston have no idea they can view wild platypus inches from the road. By developing an experience that encourages people to get outside and explore, we can increase the number of visitors that stop in rural towns like Geeveston.

"This AR approach is critical to the local economy, and it's a rapidly growing sector of technology – with the world's biggest brands focusing their efforts on AR," Mr Shering said. "Tasmania has some of the most advanced AR in the world, and is attracting international attention because of it. This is great news for our economy, and our state."

Huron Valley Council is running a competition inviting local residents to submit a name suggestion for the Huon Platypus which includes the letter combination 'AR'. Head down to Geeveston Visitor Centre to meet the AR platypus for yourself and fill out an entry form before submissions close on 15 October 2019 for a chance to win a prize package valued at more than \$300.

"I would encourage people to make a special visit to Geeveston Visitor Centre to experience the display and make a name suggestion before 15 October," said Cr Enders. "If you can't make it before then, don't worry – our AR Huon Platypus is here to stay, so you can come visit our newest local resident any time."

For more information: Mayor Bec Enders (03) 6264 0300

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