

The Life of the Yarra Audio Tour: Cafe Transcript

Narration - Sarah: Let's walk to the top of the stairs with the café to your left. How busy is the café today? Mark Tanner from Kanteen Café tells us what it's like to have worked here for the last 13 years...

Mark Tanner: "My name's Mark Tanner, I've been here at Como Park North since 2003, since the was just a little kiosk and change room at the end of the building that we transformed into a lovely outdoor dining experience. Easily the best thing about being down here would be that 13 years down the track you're still here every morning enjoying the mornings. You're not on the main street, you're not part of the café culture, you're independent. And it's a beautiful place, you can sit here in the morning and have the rowing boats go past. You can sit here and watch the balloons take off in the park opposite, there's always something different. It's its own little piece of romance. Easily my favourite time of day here would be between 5.30 and 7. Before the café opens. Because that's my time to sit and enjoy the park. You're busy setting up but you've still got this beautiful environment to soak up every morning. Beautiful, peaceful, you've got the kookaburras sitting in their four corners and singing in the 4 corners of their area, you've got the possums sneaking back to bed, there's always something happening in the morning"

Narration - Sarah: Looking upstream from the cafe, at the top of the bank, there are a few different types of big, old gum trees; you can tell from their bark. Let's walk over to touch them and feel the difference. Mature eucalyptus trees get a new outer-layer of bark each year, but what happens to this bark varies between different species. Some like the smooth tree here, shed their outer layer. Others like the rough tree here. Compare the size of these gum trees, with young ones recently planted further down.

Narration - Sarah: Walk to the seat down by the river and take a moment to look at the artwork you see here. This white structure was created by Jonathan Jones and is called *untitled (willam)*. Jonathan Jones is a Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi man from NSW. His art often explores the relationships between community and the individual, personal and public, object and environment, historical and contemporary.

He conceived this artwork especially for this site. The architectural forms and spaces of traditional south-east camps and shelters are a reference to the Kulin wilam, or home. The sculptures suggest ideas of shared space and common memories, celebrating the local Aboriginal history and living cultures. The tops of the structures light up at night like camp fires along the river, transforming light into a bridge between cultures, spaces and people. Here's Arweet Carolyn Briggs of the Boon Wurrung language group's reaction to this artwork...

Arweet Carolyn Briggs: *Saw the art, and I went, 'he got it'. it means place, it's a place a part of their camp, because the waterways, like it's the life blood. and this is his way of doing a sort of lean to. Because you're only there in certain seasons as the water will be up. You got to think about when you'd be at this place. So that Willam was shelter. That's what it means, Shelter. Willam is camp. It's home. it was the people's home. And in that they spoke boon wurrung.*

Narration - Sarah: In a busy city we can get caught up in the many things we have going on in our lives, and forget to take note of the environment around us. By opening up the riverbank, the City of Stonnington hope to give residents and visitors a chance to connect with nature. As Sarah Buckley, Council's Senior Sustainable Environment officer, explains...

Sarah Buckley: *The community is getting increased open space and recreational space. Sections with revegetation and community interaction nodes, where previously the sites were inaccessible. City of Stonnington has one of the lowest per capita open space percentage, so anywhere where open space is increased is an improvement for the community.*

Sarah Buckley: *So you're getting a green, cool space to move in an out of, even if you're not from the local area. And you're getting the chance to, I like to think, connect with biodiversity in a highly urbanised environment, whether you live in Stonnington or not. Biodiversity can be varying tree species you see around, or having localised wildlife - frogs, birds, fish. So it's a chance for biodiversity interaction you might not get unless you were to move outside of the suburban areas of Melbourne.*

Narration - Sarah: From here, you can see Herring Island just across the water. Herring Island is cared for by the Friends of Herring Island. The work they have done, and continue to do, demonstrate what people can achieve for the environment when they work together. You can help care for our ecosystems here in the City of Stonnington by attending community planting days and taking part in community program. Search for "Environmental Events" on the City of Stonnington website.