

# MEDIA STATEMENT



Friday, 12 February 2016

## **Bunbury's changing face of accessibility and inclusion**

Empowering the community to become more accessible and inclusive of everyone, regardless of difference or disability, is a driving force for the City of Bunbury's 'MARCIA' scholarship recipient.

The industry engagement scholarship is a partnership between the City of Bunbury and Edith Cowan University. The doctorate level research will provide high quality data and identify directions that will give the City a considerable advantage in gaining the status of Most Accessible Regional City In Australia (MARCIA) by 2020.

Scholarship recipient Adam Johnson will look at the role of local governments and how they can work in partnership with the whole community to achieve greater access and inclusion.

"I am really looking at how local governments such as the City of Bunbury can empower people with disabilities and difference to influence businesses, government and the broader community to take action on access and inclusion," he said.

"MARCIA's success will be as much about how the City has encouraged people to get involved as it will be about the actual improvements made to things like ramps into shops or better community attitudes."

Adam has a passion for social inclusion and has worked in disability and community development for 15 years, as well as being a long-time member of the City of Bunbury's Community Access Committee.

He said MARCIA was about incremental progress and that accessibility in Bunbury had already improved significantly.

"In the last six months we have seen four new businesses open on Victoria Street that are wheelchair-friendly," he said.

"There have been many other improvements made over the last 10 years, such as the Accessible Playground at the Big Swamp park.

"But MARCIA is much bigger than just improving access for people living with a physical disability. It is also about people feeling welcomed and included in the life of the community, no matter what their circumstances.

"Our ageing population and growing cultural diversity are two more reasons why this is important."

City of Bunbury Deputy Mayor and Community Access Committee chairman Brendan Kelly said Adam's work would reinforce the City's commitment to achieving the MARCIA title.

Jamie Tatham, Communications Officer

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“This research project is expected to inform policy development and access-related initiatives,” Cr Kelly said.

“It will help to address access and inclusion needs for our region while also encouraging other cities and towns around Australia to do the same.”

Bunbury Mayor Gary Brennan said the MARCIA initiative was a fine example of the Council “facilitating” and the community “doing”.

“Empowering the community to have a hands-on role in the way our City is shaped is a key to Bunbury building on its growing vibrancy and diversity,” Mr Brennan said.

**ENDS**

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