



RiverConnect

ANNUAL REPORT

2015 – 2016

For the
Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
And
Greater Shepparton City Council
(TRIM: C16/11570)

GENERAL

Mission

The mission of RiverConnect is to create a vibrant, more cohesive Greater Shepparton community through developing a strong sense of belonging and connection to our rivers.

This will be achieved by understanding and enhancing the environmental, cultural, recreational and economic value of the rivers.

Vision

Shepparton and Mooroopna will be widely recognised as river towns where features of living here include:

- a thriving natural environment*
- a connection with that environment*
- a culture that is enriched by the traditional owners' connection with the area*

People value and respect our rivers and floodplains, whilst using them as part of their daily lives for recreation, relaxation and education. The community, government and land managers, together with the traditional owners, work in partnership to protect and enhance the value of our rivers.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Schools National Tree Day plantings were the biggest yet with 9 schools and 540 students participating on 12 occasions planting 1331 local indigenous trees and shrubs.
- RiverConnect Strategic Plan review commenced and all partners have strongly reinforced their commitment to the project
- RiverConnect Shared Paths Master Plan adopted at November council meeting
- Interpretive signage and seating installed at Boulevard Bush Reserve
- Flats signage won the Greater Shepparton City Council Cultural Heritage Interpretive Signage award
- RiverConnect celebrated 10 years.
- Short stories project developed with the expert assistance of Bruce Cumming and RiverConnect partners and community members. Two films have been completed:
Riverconnect – A unique and wonderful place
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5B0np9f2AQs>
Riverconnect – River Flight 2 – Reconnecting people back to the bush
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m73KljceLQM>

MEETINGS

Each RiverConnect committee meeting has a strong focus on partnership program opportunities, therefore enabling cross agency and community discussion amongst partners. Partners represented on the RiverConnect committees include:

- Greater Shepparton City Council
- Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
- Parks Victoria
- Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation
- Goulburn Murray Landcare Network
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative
- Shepparton Mooroopna Urban Landcare Group

RiverConnect Committees

- RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee
 - Review of Strategic Plan commenced
 - 10 year celebration of RiverConnect
 - Support formally given to Eastbank Lake Project
- Education Alliance

- 6 education alliance meetings held throughout the year
- 2 teacher PD days held
- Land Managers Working Group
 - In-stream boom gate tour to Melbourne June 26
 - Interpretive signs and seat installation at Boulevard Bush Reserve
- Communications Working Group
 - RiverConnect short films project
 - Development of new RiverConnect Vision and Purpose

Meetings held every 8 weeks with most groups meeting 6 times per calendar year.

OFFICER TRAINING

(EPO- Education Project Officer, PO – Project Officer)

- **Council internal processes**
 - Creative Problem Solving
 - CPR Refresher
 - Negotiation Power
 - Introduction to Project Management
 - From Busyness to Effectiveness workshop
- **Professional Development**
 - Glider Symposium
 - Native Pasture ID
 - NSW AAEE Environmental Educators Conference
 - Biodiversity, Wetlands and Waterways Catchment Knowledge Conference
 - Biodiversity across Borders Conference



Image 1: Sacred Kingfisher – Boulevard Bush Reserve Flora Walk

1. RIVERCONNECT FINANCIAL REPORT

2015/2016 FINANCIAL YEAR

TABLE 1: RIVERCONNECT OPERATING COSTS BREAKDOWN

Description	Proponent Funds (Greater Shepparton City Council)		Other Contributor Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority		Other Contributor		Total Budget 2015-2016	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
Employment / Project Management / Facilitation	65,000	64,356	58,159	78,159	0	0	123,260	142,515
in-kind/volunteer labour	15,000	7,280	0	0		0	14,899	7,280
Total employment Costs (GST exclusive)	80,000	71,636	58,159	78,159	0	0	138,159	149,795
Engagement Event	0	37,416	12,759	12,759	0	56	12,759	50,231
Communications	0	0	5,879	3,984	0	0	5,879	3,984
Revegetation	0	6,797	3,203	3,203	0	0	3,203	10,000
Total Operating Costs (GST exclusive)	80,000	44,213	21,841	21,841	0	56	21,841	66,110
Total Budget 2015-2016 (GST exclusive)	80,000	115,849	80,000	100,000	0	56	160,000	215,905

Other Funding:

\$56 received from the sale of promotional items such as hats from the Shepparton Tourist Information Centre.

RIVERCONNECT STRATEGIC PLAN

Actions in the Strategic Plan are listed under five key strategic themes in order to create change and achieve the vision for RiverConnect. Detailed objectives have been developed for each of these five strategic program areas to define what represents successful outcomes. Achievements under each section of the strategic programs are listed below.

CONNECTING COMMUNITY

To provide access and facilities, together with activities and information to enable the community to value the river and its environment and visit and enjoy this area as an integral part of their lifestyle.

TABLE 2: 'ACTIVITIES IN THE PARK' EVENTS LED BY RIVERCONNECT IN THE 2015-2016 FINANCIAL YEAR

Date	Activity	Location	Community Participant numbers
Saturday 10 October 2015	Bird Walk	Australian Botanic Gardens, Kialla Tip Road, Shepparton.	18
Sunday 18 October 2015	Boulevard Bush Reserve Flora Walk	Boulevard Bush Reserve, North Shepparton	20
Tuesday 20 October 2015	Spotlight Walk - October	Goulburn River	9
Wednesday 28 October 2015	Photography along the River - Basics	Jordans Bend, Jordan Place, Shepparton	11
Sat 14 November 2015	Flats Walk + Bush Tucker	The Flats - Chinamans Gardens Mooroopna	34
Nov 2015-Feb 2016	Spotlight Walks (4)	Various locations along the Goulburn River	39
Mon 18th Jan2016	Turtle Talk	Behind Council Offices. Marungi St Carpark, Shepparton.	81
Sat 27 Feb 2016	Art Along the River	Australian Botanic Gardens, Kialla Tip Road Shepparton	10
Sun 20 March 2016 - AM	Canoeing on the Goulburn	Kaieltheban Park, off Archer St Mooroopna TO Daintons Bridge, Midland HwyShepparton	35
Sun 20 March 2016 - PM	Canoeing on the Goulburn	Daintons Bridge, Midland Hwy Shepparton Jordans Bend, Jordan Place, North Shepparton	32
Wed 6 April 2016	Bat Discovery Night	Aquamoves and Goulburn River	16
TOTAL:	14 Events		305



Image 2: Bird Walk at Botanic Gardens, Kialla Tip Road Kialla

- **RiverConnect 10 year celebration** held on a hot summer day in December. 40 past and current partners attended, sharing stories of the project and its achievements. Awards presented to 2 long term partners: Rod McLennan and Bruce Cumming.
- **Spotlight Walks** –Community walks lead by Goulburn Murray Landcare Network spotting various local nocturnal species along Goulburn River locations.
 - 4 walks with a total of 37 participants.
 - Locations: Tom Collins Drive (south end of lake towards the Confluence) and Moira Park.
- **National Tree Day 2015** – Sunday 26 July, 2015 at Tassicker Reserve, Kittles Road Shepparton. The Greater Shepparton City Council event was supported by RiverConnect.
 - 59 attendees
 - 500 trees and plants planted
- **KidsFest** September 19 & 20 2015 at KidsTown. Partnered with Parks Victoria and Council Sustainability and Environment team. An estimated 2000 people passed through the tent, learning about the local bugs with John Laing from the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network, our native mammals and birds and wetlands. There was also an indigenous plant give-away sponsored by Greater Shepparton City Council.
- **Water Week** – 21 October 2015 – Victoria Park Lake, Shepparton - Cancelled
- **Clean Up Australia Day** – 1 March 2015 – Shepparton Weir – 38 people came along to help clean up the river banks and floodplains at the Shepparton Weir and Boulevard Bush Reserve.
- **Art Along the River** - RiverConnect offered art sessions at the Australian Botanic Gardens 27 February 2016. The class was aimed at beginner-intermediate skill levels. Kim Carter, a textile and mixed media artist lead the class. Participants learned how to make small mixed media landscapes using mostly recycled fabrics and papers plus paint. All art equipment was provided.
- **Bat Walk and Talk** – Listed as an event with the Australasian Bat Society, this discovery walk and 1 hour information session offered to locals to view the local bats of Greater Shepparton with expert bat enthusiast, Robert Bender.
- **Breakfast with the Birds** - Opportunity to discover the different types of birdlife in our riverine environment with RiverConnect and Birdlife Murray Goulburn members for a Bird Walk and Talk tour, followed by breakfast.

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- **Canoeing on the Goulburn** – Sunday 20 March 2016. Participants explored the heritage listed Goulburn River from a different perspective – on it! RiverConnect and River Country Adventours offered this free ‘Activities in the Park’ event. It provided a relaxing and informative experience for all ages.
 - 67 Participants

- **Flats walk and bush tucker** - Uncle Leon Saunders lead a unique and memorable cultural walk on The Flats. Participants learnt about significant events and heard personal stories of life growing up on the banks of the Goulburn River before enjoying a traditional style lunch.



Image 3: Uncle Leon leading Flats Walk

- **Photography Along The River** - RiverConnect and the Shepparton Camera Club offered a unique photography workshop along the Goulburn River as part of the Activities in the Park program. The basics workshop was suited to beginners or more experienced photographers looking to diversify their work.
- **Turtle Talk** – 18 January 2016. 75 participants discovered the freshwater turtles that live in our local waterways with experts from Turtles Australia. Turtles Australia exhibited live specimens. The day was made particularly special by the attendance of Yorta Yorta elders and youngsters.



Image 4: Turtles Australia talk

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- Interviewed Girl Guide participant for her Environment Badge

TABLE 3: TOTAL NUMBER OF RIVERCONNECT EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES WITH PARTICIPATION NUMBERS

Event/Activity	Number
Activities in the Park – 10 events (excluding spotlight walks)	255
Spotlight Walks (5 events)	39
National Tree Day	60
Kids Fest	2000
World Water Day	18
Big Dig Project with Mooroopna Secondary College	36
Education Events – (42 Events)	1511
Clean Up Australia Day	20
Turtle Talk	75
Word and Mouth Canoe Event	25
Trelley's Fishing Expo	50
RiverConnect 10 year celebration event	50
TOTAL:	4150

CONNECTING ENVIRONMENT

To protect, repair, enhance and sustain important river, wetland and forest environments, so that current and future generations can understand and enjoy natural river and red gum forest environments.

- One of the key requirements to improve management of the River environments is to ensure strong partnerships within key partner organisations. This took a major step forward with a meeting between Parks Vic senior leadership and some IAC members to discuss Eastbank Lake project, RiverConnect and the licensing issue including Tom Collins drive.
- Entrance signage and seating installed at Boulevard Bush Reserve, a relatively intact red gum forest adjacent to the Goulburn River and a residential growth corridor of Shepparton.



Image 5: Boulevard Bush Reserve Signage

- Site assessment completed at Kaieltheban Park, Mooroopna.
- National Tree Day revegetation activities, in collaboration with Greater Shepparton City Council. The following schools participated, planting over 1300 plants:
 - Wanganui Park Secondary College
 - Shepparton High School
 - Mooroopna Primary School
 - Undera Kindergarten
 - Shepparton Christian College
 - Shepparton English Language Centre
 - Notre Dame College
 - St Lukes Primary School
 - Wilmot Road Primary School
 - Shepparton East Primary School
 - McGuire College

CONNECTING ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

To provide programs, activities and facilities so that the whole community can understand and better appreciate the important historical and cultural significance this area holds for its traditional owners.

- Flats signage – Winner of the Cultural Heritage Interpretive Signage award.
- Flats walk and bush tucker – Uncle Leon Saunders and others lead a unique and memorable cultural walk on The Flats. Participants learnt about significant events and heard personal stories of life growing up on the banks of the Goulburn River before enjoying a traditional styled lunch.
- Rumbalara Elders Council Meeting in September
- Questionnaire developed for schools to complete on the Flats Walk
- Discussions commenced with staff from Yenbena to develop a cultural trail from Cummeragunga to Mooroopna to honour the walk off and the strong link between these two locations for Yorta Yorta people. These discussions will continue and involve council's tourism coordinator.

CONNECTING EDUCATION

To provide opportunities for the education sector and the broader community to understand the environment, culture and importance of the area as a valuable asset to appreciate, enjoy and protect.

There was a sharp increase in the number of schools that participated in RiverConnect education activities this financial year. The trend with engaging new schools continued with Undera Primary School, Ardmona Primary School and Wilmot Road Primary School enjoying their first taste of learning about the river environment.

TABLE 4: TOTAL STUDENT ATTENDANCE AT RIVERCONNECT ACTIVITIES ALONG THE RIVER 2015 / 2016

Students	Hours at the River	Schools involved	Number of school events
2112	3215	26	77

- **VCAL** : 314 VCAL students took part in classes and activities along their reach of the Goulburn or Broken Rivers. Activities included revegetation, rubbish collection, plant identification, GPS weeds and tree hollows, biodiversity audits, water quality sampling and education talks on specific environmental features. The schools that participated were Shepparton High School; McGuire College and Wanganui Park Secondary College.
- **WORKS** Students undertook the following works:
 - Weed Management – 7116m² (3 sessions – 2 weeding at Botanic Gardens 6068m² and weed ID/GPS at Broken River 1048m²)
 - Revegetation – 1355 plants were planted in an area of 30134m² (11 sites planted; 722 student hours by 589 students)
 - Rubbish Management – 9765m² (3 sessions – Botanic Gardens and Shepparton Weir)

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- GPS - 12,241m2 (3 Shepparton Weir; Jordan's Bend; 2 Broken River and introductory session at St Brendan's school). Items recorded include tree hollows, waterway features and weeds.
 - Other – Biodiversity audit conducted at the Broken River with McGuire College VCAL class.
- **Rambling at Reedy:** Tues 17 – Wed 18 May 2016 - 217 Year 4/5/6 students from the following schools:
- Tallygaroopna Primary School
 - Toolamba Primary School
 - Congupna Primary School
 - Katandra West Primary School
 - Dookie Primary School
 - Guthrie Street Primary School

The above schools participated in the following activities:

- Environmental Art – Kim Carter Textile Art (Kim Carter)
- Discover our local Turtles – Turtles Australia (Graham Stockfeld)
- Native Fish Awareness – Fisheries, Victoria (Anthony Wilson)
- Drains and Ladders – Storm Water Landcare (Lanie Pearce)
- Bug Biodiversity – BugBlitz (Deirdre Marshall)
- Big Discovery Walk – Parks Vic (Tracey O'Keefe)



Image 6: Introduction to Rambling at Reedy

- **Life at the Lake:** Victoria Park Lake 22 March 2016 - 62 Secondary School Students from the following schools:
- McGuire College
 - Wanganui Park Secondary College

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- Berry Street
 - Shepparton Christian College
 - Notre Dame College

The above schools participated in the following activities:

- Animals of Oz
- Stormwater
- Wetlands Walk
- Canoeing
- Fisheries Victoria
- Waste education



Image 7: Wetland walk – Life on the Lake

- **Virtual Forest** – Approximately 159 students from the following schools participated in this day:
 - St Mels Primary School
 - Murchison Primary School
 - Mooroopna Primary School
 - Currawa Primary School
 - Tallygaroopna Primary School
 - St Luke's Primary School
- **Big Dig**: 36 Mooroopna Secondary College students participated in the Big Dig at Gemmill Swamp with Parks Victoria and the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network.
- **Other activities included:**
 - 10 environmental education bulletins emailed out to teachers
 - Fish release at Victoria Park Lake, Fri 20 Mar 2015 – 8 Verney Road School
Students participated in this day
 - 3 Environmental Educators Meetings

COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

To provide appropriate, timely information to the community to support the achievement of the overall RiverConnect objectives and to provide well planned consultation processes that will allow the community to effectively influence the development and implementation of the RiverConnect strategic plan.

Page view and entrance numbers varied throughout the financial year but the overall page view had increased by over 1000 compared to the previous year.

TABLE 5: RIVERCONNECT WEBSITE PAGE VIEWS – JULY2015 – JUNE 2016

Month	Page views	Unique page views	Avg. Time on page	Entrances	Bounce Rate %	% Exit
July	471	368	1:17	226	69.47	47.98
August	653	466	0:50	225	69.78	34.46
September	345	263	1:31	170	65.88	49.28
October	634	506	1:32	302	66.89	47.63
November	361	290	2:11	189	65.61	65.75
December	660	468	1:29	209	59.81	31.67
January	765	506	1:31	252	62.7	32.94
February	841	602	1:40	369	69.11	43.88
March	947	619	1:09	313	63.9	33.05
April	788	642	1:26	290	60.34	36.8
May	683	542	1:25	303	68.32	44.36
June	582	455	1:28	253	65.61	43.47
TOTAL	7730	5727	2.06	3101	65.72	40.12

➤ **Newsletters** – September 2015, December 2015 and March 2016 editions.

➤ **Marketing Campaign** –

- Pull up banner designed and procured
- 300 RiverConnect Promotional mugs – RiverConnect logo and website printed on them

➤ **Media Coverage**

TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF RIVERCONNECT MEDIA COVERAGE 2015/2016

Media Source	# of articles/ interviews
Newspaper	11
Radio	0
TV	1
YouTube	5

TABLE 6: ITEMISED RIVERCONNECT MEDIA COVERAGE 2015 / 2016

Date	Topic	Title	Media
21/7/15	National Tree Day	Branch out for National Tree Day (page 5)	Shepparton News
21/7/15	Tree Planting	Kids Beautify Undera	Kyabram Press
27/7/15	National Tree Day	How green can you be? Com calls on students	Shepparton News
4/8/15	National Tree Day	Branching Out	Shepparton News
6/8/15	National Tree Day	In touch with horticulture	Shepparton News
25/8/15	Keep Australia Beautiful	Illegal dumping rife in Victoria	Shepparton News
20/11/15	Paths Project	Council agrees to extend walking path network	Shepparton News
15/12/15	10 Year Celebration Event		Win News
16/12/16	10 Year Celebration Event		Moosletter
19/1/16	Turtle Event	Shell Spell/It's time to Talk Turtles	Shepparton News
2/2/16	Knight Street Bush Kinder program		Shepparton News
12/2/16	Flats signage	Vandalism to sign hurts Elder	Shepparton News
8/3/16	Clean up Australia Day	Going Green	Shepparton News

RiverConnect 2015 / 2016 Summary

RiverConnect had another growth year, delivering over 24 individual events for 4,150 community members to engage with the Rivers. This represents a significant increase in the previous year's participants of 2,500. This can mostly be explained by the KidsFest event which saw a conservative estimate of 2000 people over the 2 day event pass through the joint RiverConnect, Goulburn Murray Landcare network, Council and Parks Victoria tent.

Student participation increased again this year from 1976 in 2014/15 to 2112 in 2015/16 spread amongst 42 individual school events. One of the many highlights has been the inclusion of kinder groups and the outreach extension of the education officer to schools such as Tatura, Undera and Murchison. These schools have a real desire to have access to RiverConnect and are embracing their opportunity.

There are of course numerous, intangible outcomes of RiverConnect that are not so easy to report on but are just as important. RiverConnect provides the platform for discussions that lead to action outside the project itself. An example is a desire by key partners to tackle the growing rubbish issues along the Goulburn River. This resulted in a meeting to develop a joint process forward that will have a significant role to play in the 2016/17 financial year.

Perhaps one of the most significant achievements this year was the 10 year celebration of the formation of RiverConnect. The celebration started with canoeing along the Goulburn River, followed by a wonderful and moving Welcome to Country by Auntie Ella Anselmi, a gourmet bar-b-que and a gathering of old and new partners at the Victoria Park Lake. Two very special and long term community partners to RiverConnect were acknowledged for their passion and commitment to connecting all of us to the wonderful river environments of Greater Shepparton over the last 10 years.



Image 8: RiverConnect Chair, Councillor Dennis Paterson (left), with founding members of RiverConnect, Bruce Cumming and Rod McLennan (centre)

RiverConnect staff would like to thank all community and agency members who participated, assisted or provided guidance on any RiverConnect event, activity, meeting or Management Plan



In partnership with: Parks Victoria, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Department of Primary Industries, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Central Sub Region, Yorta Yorta Joint Body, Yorta Yorta Nations, Rumbalara Cooperative, Word and Mouth and Goulburn Murray Landcare Network.