



RiverConnect

ANNUAL REPORT 2013 – 2014

For the
Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
And
Greater Shepparton City Council

1. 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

- Design and Installation Historical Flood Markers
- Teachers Professional Development Training
- Extensive Community Activities through the 'Activities in the Park' program
- Development of draft Boulevard Bush Reserve Environmental Management Plan
- Progression of the RiverConnect Paths draft Master Plan
- Presentation at 5th National Natural Resource Management Knowledge Conference

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
- Goulburn Valley Environment Group (GVEG)
- Word and Mouth
- Shepparton Mooroopna Urban Landcare Group
- Yorta Yorta Elders
- Academy of Sport Health and Education (ASHE)
- Gemmills Wetland Working Group

RiverConnect Committees

- RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee
 - Terms of Reference Reviewed in Oct 2013
 - New Community Representative – Geoffrey Maynard
 - Second Councillor Representative – Dennis Patterson
 - Goulburn Valley Environment Group – Terry Court
- Education Working Group
 - Working group on-hold during 2014
 - New appointment of Senior Advisory Officers for Central Sub Region DEECD
 - Creation of Education Alliance in 2014/2015

- Land Managers Working Group
 - New membership - Gemmills Wetland Working Group
- Aboriginal Action Group
 - Meeting regularly for the first time in over 12 months
 - New Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation Chair
 - Many new members
- Communications Working Group
 - New Greater Shepparton City Council representative
 - New Parks Victoria representative

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**
 - PES (Personal Evaluation System) Training – July
 - Finance Basic Power Budget - Aug
 - Customer Service training - Aug
 - Sustainability Training – Jan
- **Personal development**
 - Develop your personal resilience (3h) EPO – Nov
 - Time Management training (8h) PO
- **Professional development**
 - Community Engagement with Jim Diers (2 hrs.) - Oct
 - Report Writing (3h) EPO – Dec
 - Indigenous workshop and tour - Feb
 - Tool box for Environmental Change (Melbourne Museum) EPO – March
 - Microsoft Word Training (All Day) EPO - 13 May
 - Sustainable Working Group Melbourne Bus Tour EPO – June
 - Local Government LGMA Australasian Management Challenge PO
 - Hermann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) PO – March 2014
 - Healing the Spirit – Cultural Awareness Training (full day) PO
 - First Aid – Level 2 PO – May 2014
 - CPR Refresher EPO



Image 1: Historical Flood Marker at Jacksons Park, Shepparton.

2. RIVERCONNECT FINANCIAL REPORT

2013/2014 FINANCIAL YEAR

TABLE 1: RIVERCONNECT OPERATING COSTS BREAKDOWN

Description	Proponent Funds (group funds)		Other Contributor Greater Shepparton City Council		Funds Approved 2013-14		Total Budget 2013-14	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
Employment / Project Management / Facilitation	\$0	\$0	\$65,101	\$62,048	\$53,159	\$64,025	\$118,260	\$126,073
in-kind/volunteer labour	\$0	\$0	\$14,899	\$14,899	\$0	\$0	\$ 14,899	\$14,899
Total employment Costs (GST exclusive)	\$0	\$0	\$80,000	\$76,947	\$53,159	\$64,025	\$133,159	\$140,972
Engagement Event	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$ 18,759	\$13,188	\$ 33,759	\$28,188
Communications	\$11,114	\$12,060	\$0	\$0	\$ 5,600	\$1,537	\$ 16,714	\$13,597
Revegetation	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$ 2,482	\$1,250	\$ 2,484	\$1,250
Total Operating Costs (GST exclusive)	\$26,114	\$27,060	\$0	\$0	\$26,841	\$15,975	\$ 52,955	\$43,035
Total Capital Costs (GST exclusive)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Budget 2013-2014 (GST exclusive)	\$26,114	\$27,060	\$80,000	\$76,947	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$186,114	\$184,007

Other Funding:

Regional Development Victoria – Putting Locals First Program \$30,000 – Successful
(**RiverConnect Paths Project Master Plan** funding)

Greater Shepparton City Council – Matching \$15,000 for Putting Locals First Program – Successful
(**RiverConnect Paths Project Master Plan** funding)

Flood Marker funding \$11,900.00 – Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, Greater Shepparton City Council, RiverConnect and State Emergency Service.

Applied for Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal Funding for Gemmills Swamp Birdhide rehabilitation and plantings – Unsuccessful

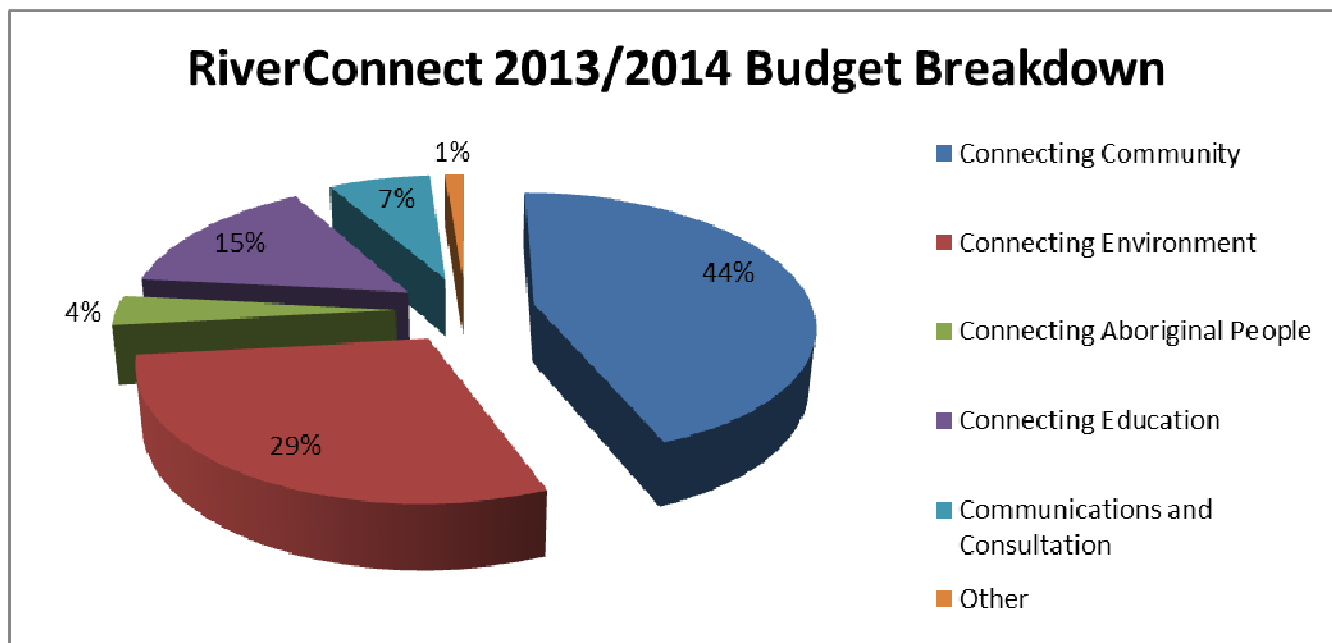


Figure 1: RiverConnect 2013/2014 Budget Breakdown

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 (Events: TRIM Ref No: 07/189/0026)

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 2013-2014 FINANCIAL YEAR

Date	Activity	Location	Community Participant numbers
6 Oct 2013	Brunch with the Birds - Cussen Park 20 yr. celebration	Cussen Park, Tatura	50
18 Oct 2013	Art Classes along the River – Seniors Festival	Victoria Park Lake	13
9 Nov 2013	Traditional Song and Dance Workshop	Victoria Park Lake	25
30 Nov 2013	Brunch with the Birds	Victoria Park Lake	28
19 Jan 2014	Canoe – Goulburn River	Daintons Bridge to Stuart Reserve	28
25 Jan 2014	Canoe – Goulburn River	Kaieltheban Park - Daintons Bridge	29
25 Jan 2014	Canoe – Goulburn River	Daintons Bridge – Jordans Bend	32
2 Feb 2014	Breaky with the Birds (World Wetlands Day)	Gemmills Swamp	20
2 Mar 2014	Clean Up Australia Day	Shepparton Weir	37
7 Mar 2014	Art Along the River	Jordans Bend	8
17 Mar 2014	Art Along the River	Jordans Bend	8
18 Mar 2014	Photography Along the River	Goulburn River - various	17
TOTAL:	12 events		295



Image 2 Left: Canoeists paddle downstream under the Watt Rd Bridge.

Image 3 Right: Art Classes along the River at Victoria Park Lake in October 2013

- **Spotlight Walks** – 11 walks with a total of 135 participants. Walks lead by a Goulburn Murray Landcare Network member. Locations: Jordans Bend (loop); Tom Collins Drive (south end of lake towards the Confluence).
- **RiverConnect Paths Project** – RiverConnect received \$30,000 from Regional Development Victoria, Putting Locals First Program to undertake project planning as part of the RiverConnect Paths Project.

A Paths Focus Group was formed to assist the consultant with the development of the RiverConnect Paths Master Plan. A project brief was developed and circulated to 6 consultants. After undergoing an evaluation process, Spiire was awarded the RiverConnect Paths Master Plan project.

A pre-drafting, stakeholder workshop was held on 3 June which saw 28 agency and community stakeholders attend to discuss all know opportunities, concerns or issues in the floodplain between Shepparton and Mooroopna.

- **RiverConnect and Word and Mouth Canoe Event** – Thursday 23 January, Kaieltheban Park to Daintons Bridge. 17 people attended with BBQ tea afterward held at Jaycee Park, Shepparton.
- **RiverConnect Canoe event** – 16 February 2014. Additional event due to high demand. Daintons Bridge to Jordans Bend – 30 people attended guided canoe tour.
- **Other events RiverConnect has participated in:**
 - **National Tree Day** Sun 28 July 2013
 - **Water Week** October 2013
 - **World Wetlands Day** 2 February 2014
 - **Clean Up Australia Day** 2 March 2014

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

Event/Activity	Community/Student Participation Number
Activities in the Park (12 events)	295
Spotlight Walks (11 events)	135
Paths Stakeholder Workshop	28
Canoe	47
National Tree Day	5
Boulevard Bush Reserve - information session	25
The Flats Walk	45
Education Events (5 events)	696
Professional Development training (Teachers)	13
TOTAL:	1289

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.

- **Boulevard Bush Reserve** – Draft Environmental Management Plan was developed with community consultation sought. Over 25 people attended the on-site information session during March 2014. The final plan is recommended for adoption at the August 2014 Council meeting.



Image 5. Shepparton High VCAL students with Parks Vic crew at Shepparton Weir in September

Image 4. Boulevard Bush Reserve Draft Environmental Management Plan

- **Shepparton Weir Upgrades** – RiverConnect Adopt-a-Reach students participated in Bollarding works as part of the Weir redevelopment – September 2013

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.

- **The Flats Walk** – 30 ASHE students and 15 Aboriginal community representatives attended a Flats Walk, Guided by Leon Saunders. November 2013. This provided an opportunity for young Aboriginal students to connect with nature and hear stories from their Elders.
- **Traditional Song and Dance Workshop** – A local dance group from Mooroopna Secondary College and Shepparton High met at Victoria Park Lake, Shepparton. Led by Shane Clarke, they performed a number of traditional dances depicting Aboriginal life before European settlement to locals, visitors and many on-lookers – November 2013



Image 6: Traditional Dance students from Shepparton High and Mooroopna SC on the grassy knoll at Victoria Park Lake.

CONNECTING EDUCATION (Numbers: M12/40872; Works: M13/69638)

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.

TABLE 4: TOTAL STUDENT ATTENDANCE AT RIVERCONNECT ACTIVITIES ALONG THE RIVER 2013 / 2014

New Students	Hours at the River	Schools involved	% of RiverConnect Schools
1383	2198.25	15	78%

Note: VCAL students participating weekly are counted once only

- **VCAL** : 62 VCAL students from 6 schools / institutes (Notre Dame College, Wanganui Park Secondary School, Berry Street, McGuire College, ASHE and Shepparton High) participated in the RiverConnect VCAL program at their Reach. Key activities: GPS work, rubbish pick up, weed management, Aboriginal History, bird watching, water quality / testing, nesting boxes.
- **WORKS** Students of all schools and year levels undertook the following works:
 - Weed Management – 1ha (4 sessions)
 - Revegetation – 348 Plants over 1ha (7 sessions)
 - Fencing - 135m Shepparton Weir (1 session)
 - Rubbish Management – 24ha (5 sessions)
- **Pest versus Rest:** 23 May 2014. 140 Year 5/6 students from Guthrie St PS participated in this event at Reedy Swamp. Activities were led by partner agencies:
 - Native Fish Awareness - Fisheries, Department of Environment and Primary Industries
 - Aboriginal Education - Parks Victoria and Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation.
 - Environmental Art – Cockatoo Island Artist Retreat
 - Natures Celebrities - Goulburn Murray Landcare Network
 - Wetlands Walk - RiverConnect
 - What bug is that? – Bug Blitz
- **Victoria Park Lake Environmental Education Day** 1 May 2014. 62 Students from four secondary schools (including Berry Street) attended this event. Students rotated through a series of activities lead by partner agencies – DEPI Fisheries, Greater Shepparton City Council, GM Landcare, Water Watch and River Country Adventours (canoeing).

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- **Professional Development Training** May 2014. Thirteen local teachers from eight schools in Greater Shepparton participated in three sessions. Topics covered were: What is RiverConnect; The local Environment; Aboriginal History; The Natural Environment - Sustainability and water; Educating for sustainability.

Presenters were from Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, Greater Shepparton City Council, Parks Victoria, Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, Bentleigh West Primary School and Bug Blitz.



Image 7: Teachers sharing ideas at the Professional Development Training

- **Tree Hollow Survey** - Berry Street students participated in a tree hollow survey at the Boulevard Bush Reserve with Landcare representatives – Aug 2013
- **Poetry Pathway** - In October a [celebration morning tea](#) was held in front of Eastbank for students who participated in the Pest vs. Rest during May 2013 and created poems inspired by the environment. 48 students, their teachers and approximately 6 parents attended.



Image 8: Mayor Jenny Houlihan thanking students for their poems from Pest vs Rest field day.

- **Wetlands Tour and Canoe event at VPL** – on the 23 Oct 140 students from 3 local secondary schools paddled on the lake followed by a wetlands tour.
 - **Adopt-a-reach blog page**- schools have the opportunity to post articles about their experiences at the river on the individual [school blog pages](#).
 - **Clean Up Australia Day** - St Mel's Primary School (approximately 300 students) attended Clean Up Australia Day at their Reach and Victoria Park Lake. They wrote a letter to the mayor about the rubbish problem and had an article in the paper. March 2014
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COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION (Website: M12/70405; Articles/media:M12/46751)

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.

➤ Murray River Guardian for 2013-14

An article about The Flats Interpretive signs between Shepparton and Mooroopna was published on [page 11 of the Murray River Guardian](#)

➤ Website Statistics

Page view and entrance numbers steadily increased through the financial year. From May 2014, website statistics will only represent external traffic.

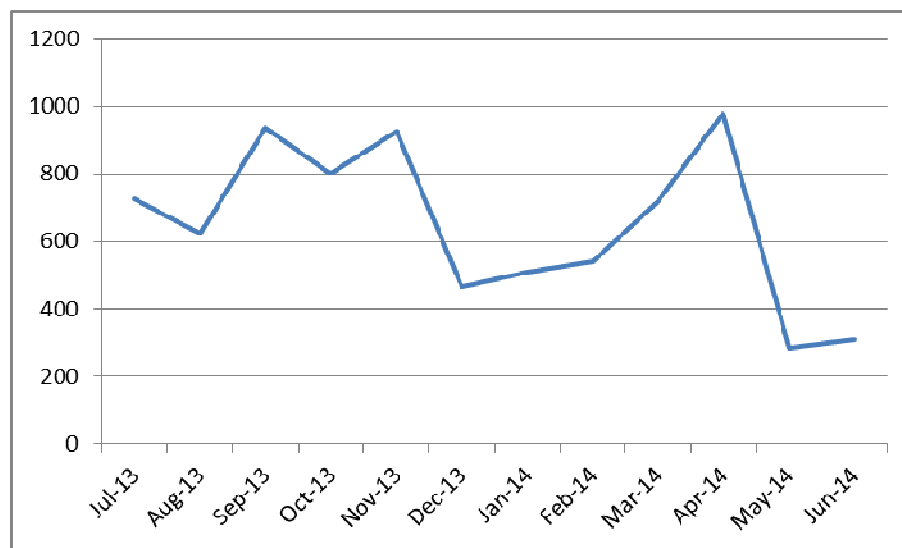


Figure 2: RiverConnect Website Page Views (Internal and external) from July 2013 to April 2014 (statistics for May and June are external views only)

➤ Newsletters – [September 2013](#), [December 2013](#), [March 2014](#) and [June 2014](#) editions.

➤ Marketing Campaign –

- Presentations to Kiwanis Club of Mooroopna – 11 Sept, Rotary of Mooroopna – 30 Sept and University of the Third Age – 4 Oct.
- 100 RiverConnect bucket hats with website and 500 RiverConnect magnets Feb 2014 (available at the Visitor Information Centre), included in various 'show bags'

➤ NRM Knowledge Conference 2014 – [RiverConnect presented](#) at the 5th National NRM Knowledge Conference during March 2014, which focused on the theme 'Regional NRM – Communities in Action: viable communities, productive and healthy landscapes.'

➤ Media Coverage

TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF RIVERCONNECT MEDIA COVERAGE 2013/2014

Media Source	# of articles/ interviews
Newspaper	12
Radio	2
TV	3

TABLE 6: ITEMISED RIVERCONNECT MEDIA COVERAGE 2013/2014

Date	Topic	Title	Media
11-Jul-13	Spotlight Walks	Taking in night fauna	Shepparton News
13-Dec-13	Poetry pathway	Inspired by Nature	Shepparton News
20-Jan-14	Paths Project	Town Pathway Plan	Shepparton News
8-Feb-14	Flats walk	Six reasons to visit Mooroopna	The Age Traveller
19-Feb-14	Canoeing	Paddlers take in water-level perspective	Shepparton News
28-Feb-14	Clean Up Aus Day	x	Weeknights
25-Feb-14	B- Clean Up Aus Day	x	Star FM
1-Mar-14	Business Clean Up Aus Day	(feature article about the event)	Shepparton News
1-Mar-14	Clean Up Aus Day	Paid Advertisement	Shepparton News
1-Mar-14	Clean Up Aus Day	(feature article with GM Landcare reps)	Shepparton News
30-Apr-14	VPL Enviro Day - 1 May	x	Star FM
17-May-14	Flood Markers	Artistic flood gauges	Shepparton News
21-May-14	Flood Markers	x	WIN News
23-May-14	Flood Markers	Measuring gets smart	Shepparton News
22/23 May 14	Flood Markers	x	Weeknights
26-May-14	Pest vs. Rest	Students sample creepy crawlies	Shepparton News
28-May-14	Flood Markers	Markers display a flooding history	The Adviser



Image 9: Canoe article in the Shepparton News

RiverConnect 2013/2014 Summary

RiverConnect achieved nearly all objectives for the year. The program delivered a large number of Engagement Events, well above the targeted amount, which leads to an overall increase in community participation and therefore an increased awareness of the Goulburn and Broken Rivers and their floodplains.

Student participation increased from 2012-2013, with six of RiverConnects VCAL schools taking up the elective. The reformation of the Aboriginal Action group also brought more depth and awareness to a number of RiverConnect projects.

One of RiverConnects greatest strengths is its ability to facilitate coordinated partnerships to deliver a range of projects, activities and events. Often the limited funding available to RiverConnect is used to leverage funding through partner agencies and additional external funding. An example of this is the Historical Flood Markers, which attracted an extra \$10,363.65 from three partner agencies.

Key achievements for RiverConnect in the 2013/2014 financial year include:

- Design and Installation of Historical Flood Markers
- Teacher Professional Development sessions
- Extensive Community Activities through the 'Activities in the Park' program
- Development of draft Boulevard Bush Reserve Environmental Management Plan
- Progression of the draft RiverConnect Paths Master Plan
- Presentation at the 5th National Natural Resource Management Knowledge Conference

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.



Image 10: Goulburn River showing Fryers Street Bridge and Jetty – circa 1900