



RiverConnect

ANNUAL REPORT 2014 – 2015

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

- Boulevard Bush Reserve Environmental Management Plan – Council endorsement
- RiverConnect Paths Master Plan
- Design of the Boulevard Bush Reserve Interpretive Signage
- Development of the RiverConnect Short Stories Documentaries (not completed)
- Winner of Greater Shepparton Cultural Heritage Award for The Flats Interpretive Signage
- Over 2,500 people participating in Community events and activities
- Nearly 2000 students spent 2888 hours at the River
- The first RiverConnect kinder session
- RiverConnect Memorandum of Understanding re-signed

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

RiverConnect Committees

- RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee
 - Memorandum of Understanding re-signing April 2015
 - New Parks Victoria representative – Andrew McDougall
- Education Alliance
 - New Education Alliance created
 - Alliance meetings qualify as Teachers Professional Development training.
- Land Managers Working Group
 - New chair – Neville Wells
- Aboriginal Action Group
 - Did not meet during 2014/2015
- Communications Working Group

- New Goulburn Broken CMA representative – Jim Castles

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
 - HBDI Training - September
 - Equal Employment Training - November
 - Leading Teams – Team Building Session – June
- **Professional Development**
 - Healing the Spirit – Aboriginal Awareness training – July (PO and EPO)
 - First Aid – Level 2 – May (EPO)
 - Managing our Native Grasslands Workshop – August (PO)
 - The Future of Communities Conference – October (PO)
 - Goulburn Broken Environmental Watering Forum – December (PO)
 - National Apology Breakfast – February (EPO)
 - General Conditions of AS4000 – 1997 Training – March (PO)
 - SEED Student Environmental Day – March (EPO)
 - Wildlife of the Goulburn Broken CMA – April (PO and EPO)
 - Night out with the Bats – April (EPO)
 - Asset Based Community Development Training – April (EPO)
 - Biodiversity, wetlands and waterways catchment knowledge conference – May (PO)
 - Biodiversity Across the Borders conference – June (PO and EPO)



Image 1: RiverConnect Paths Master Plan

2. RIVERCONNECT FINANCIAL REPORT

2014/2015 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 2014-2015	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual
Employment / Project Management / Facilitation	\$65,101	\$72,735	\$58,159	\$67,406.80	\$0	\$0	\$123,260	\$140,141.80
in-kind/volunteer labour	\$14,899	\$14,899	\$0	\$0		\$0	\$ 14,899	\$14,899
Total employment Costs (GST exclusive)	\$80,000	\$87,634	\$58,159	\$67,406.80	\$0	\$0	\$138,159	\$155,040.80
Engagement Event	\$0	\$0	\$12,759	\$7,568.20	\$ 3,247	\$7,247	\$ 16,006	\$14,815.20
Communications	\$0	\$0	\$5,879	\$3,822	\$ 0	\$5,057	\$ 5,879	\$8,879
Revegetation	\$0	\$0	\$3,203	\$1,203	\$ 0	\$0	\$ 3,203	\$1,203
Total Operating Costs (GST exclusive)	\$0	\$0	\$21,841	\$12,593.20	\$3,247	\$12,304	\$ 25,088	\$24,897.20
Total Budget 2013-2014 (GST exclusive)	\$80,000	\$87,634	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$3,247	\$12,304	\$163,247	\$179,938

Other Funding:

RiverConnect Paths Project Master Plan funding \$3,247 -Regional Development Victoria – Putting Locals First Program
(full amount from RDV was \$30,000 with \$26,753 received in 2013/2014. Council matched \$15,000)

RiverConnect Short Stories funding \$5,000 – Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority

Boulevard Bush Reserve Signage funding \$4,000 – Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority

Boulevard Bush Reserve Seating funding \$1,600 – Greater Shepparton Community Matching Grant through Goulburn Murray Landcare Network

RiverConnect Bucket Hats funding \$900 - Greater Shepparton City Council

Applied for Communities for Nature Funding for Boulevard Bush Reserve works – Unsuccessful

Applied for Local Landscape Enhancement Funding for seating and signage - Unsuccessful

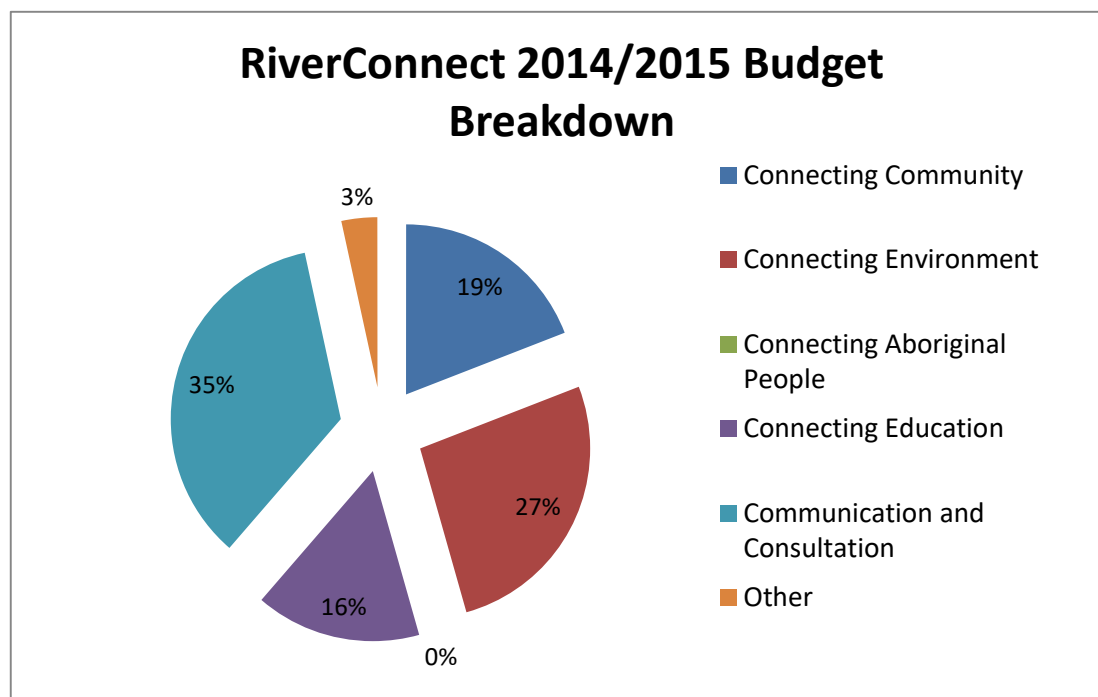


Figure 1: RiverConnect 2014/2015 Budget Breakdown

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 2014-2015 FINANCIAL YEAR

Date	Activity	Location	Community Participant numbers
21 Oct 2014	Photography along the River – Seniors Festival	Stuart Reserve	19
25 Oct 2014	Art Class along the River – Seniors Festival	Victoria Park Lake	15
18 Jan 2015	Canoe – Goulburn River	Kaieltheban Park - Daintons Bridge	34
18 Jan 2015	Canoe – Goulburn River	Daintons Bridge – Jordans Bend	32
22 Feb 2014	Brunch with the Birds	Victoria Park Lake	15
1 Mar 2014	Clean Up Australia Day Events	Shepparton Weir and Boulevard Bush Reserve, various	48
various	Spotlight Walks (8)	Various locations	65
TOTAL:	15 events		228



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

Image 3 Right: Art Classes along the River at the Goulburn River, Tom Collins Drive

- **Spotlight Walks** –Community walks lead by Goulburn Murray Landcare Network spotting various local nocturnal species along Goulburn River locations.
 - 8 walks with a total of 108 participants.
 - Locations: Tom Collins Drive (south end of lake towards the Confluence), Gemmills Swamp, Botanic Gardens and Moira Park.

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- **RiverConnect Paths Project** – RiverConnect received \$30,000 from Regional Development Victoria, Putting Locals First Program and \$15,000 2:1 matching funding from Greater Shepparton City Council to undertake project planning as part of the RiverConnect Paths Project.

The RiverConnect Paths Focus Group guided the development of the draft RiverConnect Paths Master Plan. A final RiverConnect Paths Master Plan was submitted to Regional Development Victoria in April 2015 but has not yet been endorsed by Greater Shepparton City Council.

- received over 165 responses to the draft RiverConnect Paths Master Plan
- Route 1 emerged as community priority

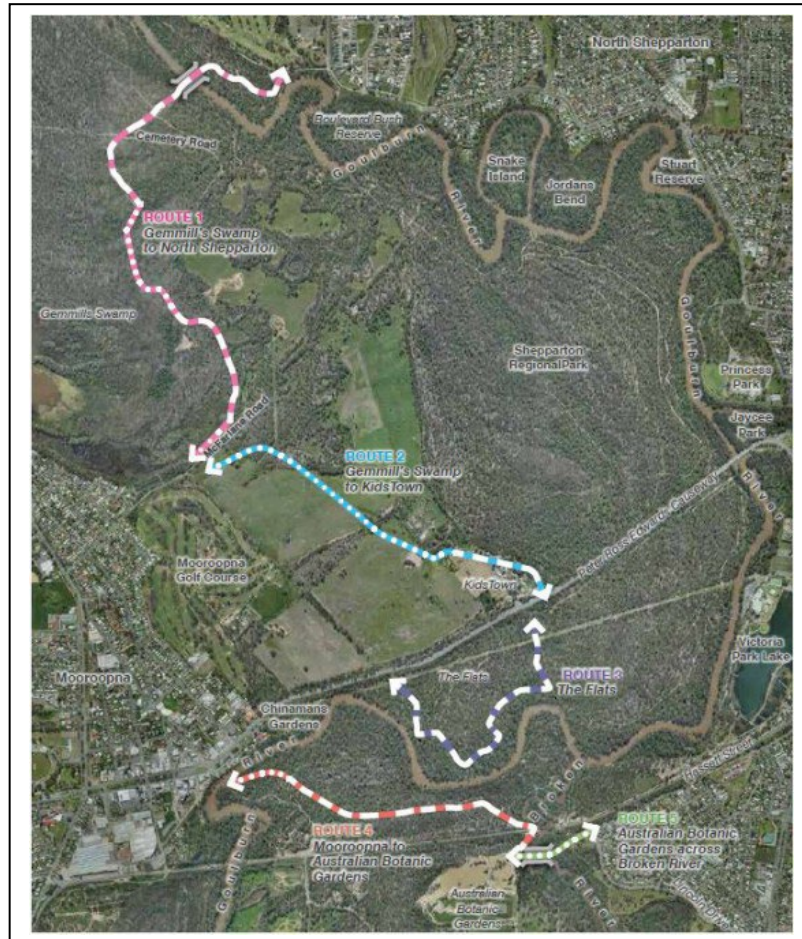


Image 2: Five proposed new routes outlined in the RiverConnect Paths Master Plan.

- **National Tree Day 2014** – Sunday 27 July at Tassicker Reserve, Kittles Road Shepparton. The Greater Shepparton City Council event was supported by RiverConnect.
 - 66 attendees
 - 600 trees and plants planted
- **RiverConnect and Word and Mouth Canoe Event** – Thursday 2 September, This joint RiverConnect and Word and Mouth event gave the opportunity for young people to experience the Goulburn River from a different perspective before enjoying a BBQ at the Word and Mouth reach.
 - canoe from Kaieltheban Park, Mooroopna to Daintons Bridge, Shepparton
 - 17 attendees
- **KidsFest** – 20 and 21 September, KidsTown. RiverConnect partnered with the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network and Council to feature invertebrates, nests and other interesting nature objects, as well as taxidermy animals. There were indigenous plant give-aways, the Watts Working Better Street light project was on display and the Rural City of Wangaratta sustainability trailer.
 - Over 1000 people through the RiverConnect marquee

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- Parents were amazed at how long their child spent in the “bug” tent
 - **Twilight Strolls** – 24 October 2014 and 20 March 2015, at KidsTown. Participants walk from either Aqua Moves or Chinamans Garden to KidsTown to participate in free activities, including a BBQ. RiverConnect displays its taxidermy animals, bird nest and bugs and usually produces a questionnaire/survey for participants to complete on their walk.
 - Over 120 people visited the RiverConnect Stall
 - 40 completed surveys were received
 - **Virtual Forest** – 7 March 2015, Maude St Mall. The Splinters Group led a ‘virtual forest’ art session as part of the SheppARTon Festival. RiverConnect donated \$500 to this event which looked to improve the communities’ awareness of our riverine environments.
 - Over 400 participants
 - **Turtle Presentation** – 19 May at the Greater Shepparton City Council Offices. RiverConnect and Turtles Australia presented our local turtle species to community members.
 - 13 participants
 - **Water Week** October 2014 – RiverConnect Education Officer attended the Opening event/ Terry Taps birthday at the GV Education centre in Mooroopna and led a nature walk.
 - 5 participants

The secondary school Environmental Education day was once again held at Victoria Park Lake including canoeing, Aboriginal history, water quality and wetland walk.

 - 86 students
 - **Clean Up Australia Day** – Business clean up with Greater Shepparton City Council staff and a community day on 1 March 2015
 - Held at Boulevard Bush Reserve
 - Over 40 attendees

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

Event/Activity	Number
Activities in the Park (6 events (minus spotlights))	163
Spotlight Walks (8 events)	108
RiverConnect Paths Community Feedback	165
Canoe event	17
National Tree Day	66
KidsFest	1000
Twilight Strolls	120
Virtual Forest	400
Turtle Presentation	13
Flats Tours with Uncle Leon	2000 +
Education Events (64 events)	1976
TOTAL:	6028

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** – The final Boulevard Bush Reserve Environmental Management Plan was adopted by Greater Shepparton City Council in August 2014. It outlines actions to be implemented in the reserve over the next three years.

Actions Implemented 2014/2015:

- Hosted the Clean Up Australia Day event(in Connecting Community)
- Interpretive signage design process begun for the installation of two entrance signs and two feature species trail markers.
- Goulburn Murray Landcare Network successful application of Greater Shepparton City Council Community Matching Grant Award - \$1,600 for bench seat

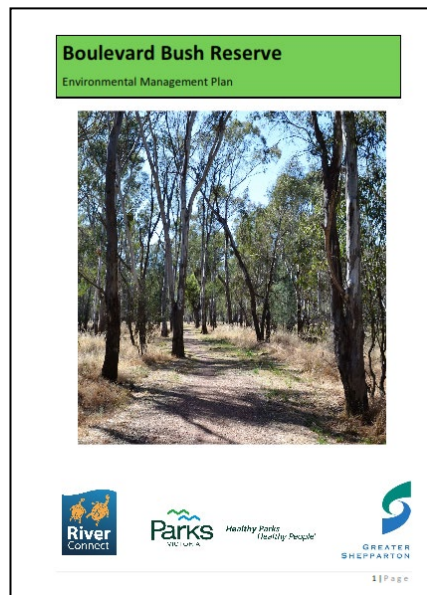


Image 3: Boulevard Bush Reserve Environmental Management Plan

- **Shepparton Weir Upgrades** – Final track upgrades and rock installations occurred at the Shepparton Weir as part of the joint funding received by RiverConnect, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, Fisheries and Parks Victoria with support from Goulburn Murray Landcare Network and Trellis's Fishing and Hunting.
 - Shepp High VCAL students assisted Parks Victoria with bollarding and planting works
- **RiverConnect Land Management Working Group – Land assessments** – A land assessment was conducted at Kaieltheban Park, Mooroopna in April 2015.

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.

- **Grater Shepparton Cultural Heritage AWARD - The Flats Interpretive Signage** - The Flats Interpretive Signage, which identifies a significant period of Aboriginal history, won the Interpretive Signage category of the Greater Shepparton Cultural Heritage Awards for 2015.
- **Flats Tours with Uncle Leon Saunders** – Uncle Leon guides a variety of groups along the Flats

Walk, recalling memories and stories of his peoples and families time on the Flats, at Cummeragunja and later, at Rumbalara.

- Approximately 3,000 people attended a Flats Tour. (There are no self-guided tour participation estimates.)

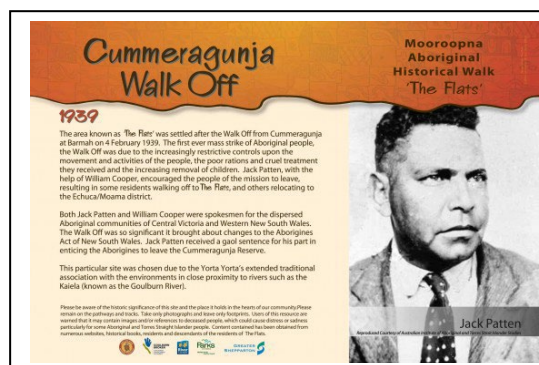


Image 4: One of six interpretive panels located on The Flats.

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 2014 / 2015

Students	Hours at the River	Schools involved	% RiverConnect Schools	Number of school events
1976	2888	19	67%	64

We had 19 schools attend RiverConnect Adopt-a-Reach events this financial year. This came to 67% of the RiverConnect schools. Other primary schools in Greater Shepparton also participated in RiverConnect activities including: Currawa, Murchison, Tatura, and Tallygaroopna. Kialla Kinder were involved with a wildlife talk at the kinder which was RiverConnects first preschool contact.

- **VCAL** : RiverConnect is a VCAL elective class at local secondary schools and institutes. Students participate in key activities at their reach such as Parks Vic Introduction, Tree planting, nest boxes, GPS work, rubbish pick up, weed management and wildlife talks.
 - 130 VCAL students from 6 schools / institutes (Notre Dame College, Wanganui Park Secondary School, Berry Street, McGuire College, ASHE and Shepparton High)
- **WORKS** Students undertook the following works:
 - Weed Management – 37ha (2 sessions – 1 weeding (1772 m²), 1 mapping at Reedy Swamp)
 - Revegetation – 261 Plants over 13960m² (9 sessions)
 - Nest boxes – 15 built (one session)
 - Tree Hollow plotting (one session)
 - Rubbish Management – 12.14Ha (5 sessions)
 - Other works:
 - Fencing 64 m of bollards at the Boulevard Bush Reserve
- **Pest verses Rest:** Tues 19 – Wed 20 May 2015.
159 year 5/6 students from St Mels, Murchison Primary, Mooroopna Primary, St Lukes, Currawa Primary and Tallygaroopna Primary Schools participated in the following activities:

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- Aboriginal Education - Indigenous Rangers, Parks Victoria
 - Environmental Art – Kim Carter
 - Bird Calls - Goulburn Murray Landcare Network
 - Rubbish Relay – Waste Officer, GSCC
 - Macro - invertebrates – Martins Butterfly World
 - Turtles – Turtles Australia

➤ **Victoria Park Lake Environmental Education Days** 22 October 2014 & 18 March 2015.

Students rotated through a series of activities lead by partner agencies – DEPI Fisheries, Greater Shepparton City Council, GM Landcare, and River Country Adventours (canoeing).

- 86 students from Notre Dame College attended

➤ **Fish releases at Lake Bartlett and Victoria Park Lake** – with DEPI Fisheries on 17 September 2014 & 20 March 2015. Students from Tatura Primary School and Verney Road participated in the release of Rainbow Trout into Victoria Park Lake and Lake Bartlett.

- 168 students in total



Image 5: Students releasing trout

➤ Other activities included:

- ASHE Nest Box construction session at Bunning's (15 boxes, **10 students**) – Aug 2014
 - Big Dig project with Mooroopna Secondary College (approx. **45 students**) – Sept 2014
 - VCE Biology Classes – Shepp Christian, October 2014 and McGuire College April 2015.
 - A series of sessions at their reach with Mooroopna Primary and St Lukes Primary School.
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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.

➤ Website Statistics

Page view and entrance numbers steadily increased through the financial year.

Month	Page views	Unique page views	Avg. Time on page	Entrances	Bounce Rate %	% Exit
Jul-14	354	266	1:12	171	70.18	48.31
Aug-14	264	217	1:56	151	73.51	57.20
Sep-14	369	297	1:09	202	73.76	54.74
Oct-14	661	539	1:17	352	65.34	53.25
Nov-14	585	489	1:23	317	70.66	54.19
Dec-14	430	328	1:28	232	75.86	53.95
Jan-15	560	449	1:21	310	77.44	55.36
Feb-15	499	400	1:30	284	73.59	56.91
Mar-15	492	381	1:35	252	72.22	51.22
Apr-15	464	336	1:24	207	72.46	44.61
May-15	1131	789	1:01	368	61.14	32.54
Jun-15	518	413	1:29	246	63.41	47.49

Figure 2: RiverConnect Website Page Views from July 2014 to June 2015.

➤ **Newsletters** – [September 2014](#), [December 2014](#), [March 2015](#) and [June 2015](#) editions.

➤ Marketing Campaign –

- Presentation to Sunrise Kiwanis Club of Shepparton, Kiwanis of Mooroopna, Mooroopna Community Plan Committee, Shepparton Central Rotary on RiverConnect Paths Master Plan
- Presentation to Disability Advisory Committee, Council Planning Department and Shepparton Bicycle Users Group on RiverConnect Paths Master Plan
- Spoke to Greater Shepparton Visitor Information Centre's August and December Famil Tours on RiverConnect and Flood Markers.
- Presented RiverConnect to Murray Darling Association, Region 2 meeting – April
- Presented RiverConnect to Suzanna Sheed - April
- 100 RiverConnect bucket hats with website (available for purchase at the Visitor Information Centre)
- 300 RiverConnect Mugs with website (available for purchase at the Visitor Information Centre)

➤ Media Coverage

TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF RIVERCONNECT MEDIA COVERAGE 2014/2015

Media Source	# of articles/ interviews
Newspaper	9
Radio	2
TV	4
YouTube	2

TABLE 6: ITEMISED RIVERCONNECT MEDIA COVERAGE 2014 / 2015

Date	Topic	Title	Media
2-Sep-14	Mooroopna PS Science Week Event	Students soak up day of fun activities involving river health	Shepparton News
17-Sep-14	Fish Release at Lake Bartlett	x	Tatura Guardian
17-Sep-14	Fish Release at Vic Park Lake	x	Shepparton News
17-Sep-14	Fish Release at Vic Park Lake	x	Win News
24-Sep-14	Fish Release at Vic Park Lake	Lake gets a 'trout load' of fish	The Adviser
28-Oct-14	Australian Botanic Gardens	Gardens take shape	Shepparton News
28-Oct-14	Draft Paths Master Plan	Have say on paths	Shepparton News
19-Jan-15	Activities in the Park - Canoeing	Canoeists make Splash on River / Novice Canoeists take to River	Shepparton News
20-Mar-15	Fish Release at Victoria Park Lake	x	Win News
20-Mar-15	Fish Release at Victoria Park Lake	x	Weeknights
20-Mar-15	Fish Release at Victoria Park Lake	Fish Release- Victoria Park Lake March 2015	Council Facebook
23-Mar-15	Fish Release at Victoria Park Lake	More Fish Added	Shepparton News
18-May-15	Turtles	N/A - Interviewed Graham Stockfeld - Turtles Australia	Matt Dowling
20-May-15	Pest vs. Rest @ Reedy Swamp	Greater Shepparton City Council @ Reedy Swamp	Council Facebook
21-May-15	Reedy Swamp Environment day	Bonny quoted on the news	Radio
21-May-15	Reedy Swamp Environment day	In touch with Environment	Shepparton News
22-May-15	Reedy Swamp Environment day	Interview- Graham Stockfeld, Bonny, 2 students	Weeknights



Image 9: Pest vs. Rest article in the Shepparton News

RiverConnect 2014 / 2015 Summary

RiverConnect achieved nearly all objectives for the 2014/2015 financial year. The program delivered over 24 Engagement Events, which attracted nearly 2,500 participants. This led to an overall increase in community participation and therefore an increased awareness of our local riverine environments.

Student participation increased from 1383 new students in 2013/2014, to 1976 in 2014/2015, with 67% of RiverConnect Schools taking part in activities along their reach. The Flats Interpretive signage winning the Greater Shepparton Cultural Heritage Award was a highlight as was the initiation of the RiverConnect Short Stories project.

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 Boulevard Bush Reserve Interpretive signage and the RiverConnect Short Stories, which attracted an extra \$9,000 from RiverConnect partner agencies.

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