

ATTACHMENT TO AGENDA ITEM

Ordinary Meeting

20 December 2016

**Agenda Item 10.5 Draft RiverConnect Strategic Plan Community
Consultation**

Attachment 1 RiverConnect Strategic Plan Review 404

Attachment 2 RiverConnect Strategic Plan Draft 406

RiverConnect Strategic Plan Review



PROCESS AND TIMEFRAMES				
	Activities	Actions	Timeframes	Tasks
Step 1	Information Gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish Steering Group - Commence collections of background information - Develop discussion paper - Identify consultation methods - Develop consultation tools - Commence Review of 2010-2015 strategic Plan 	Jan – Feb 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise meetings with steering group • Identify key stakeholders • Layout of documents
Step 2	Engagement and Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seek endorsement of documents from IAC - Consult with stakeholders via coffee catch-up and phone conversations - Compile feedback 	March – April 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and present slide show to IAC • Send out invitation to stakeholders via email with Discussion Paper • Organise meetings with stakeholders for coffee catch ups • Summarise feedback • Consultant finalise review of strategic Plan 2010-2015
Step 3	Development of Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gather collected data from consultation activities - Write the draft plan - IAC to drive the draft plan 	June - October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant and steering group meet to develop draft • Documents to be circulated prior to IAC meeting • IAC meetings to include strategic plan agenda item
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft RiverConnect Strategic Plan is presented to the community for consultation 	3 February 2017 – 31 March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation activities to be matched to take advantage of existing events • Contact stakeholders - email, website, newsletters, facebook, twitter, attend



RiverConnect Strategic Plan Review

PROCESS AND TIMEFRAMES				
	Activities	Actions	Timeframes	Tasks
		- Feedback from consultation is worked into plan	April	meetings, community forums • Consultant and steering group compile information • Develop a 'what you said document' • Integrate feedback as required
Step 4	Finalisation	- IAC endorsement of Final Strategic Plan	April meeting	• Send draft plan to IAC prior to meeting • Consultant and steering group present document to IAC for endorsement
		- Councillor Briefing	30 May	
		- Council Meeting (to adopt the Strategic Plan)	20 June	
Step 5	Implementation of Key Actions Identified within the Plan	- Consider launching the plan with celebration - Commence working on priorities identified	Ongoing	



Strategic Plan 2017-2022

We the undersigned ...

Are pleased to have contributed to the development of the RiverConnect Strategic Plan 2017-2022 and look forward to working in partnership to deliver the Strategy.

Peter Harriott
CEO, Greater Shepparton City Council

Chris Norman
CEO, Goulburn Broken CMA

John Lang
President, Goulburn Murray Landcare Network

Goulburn Valley Environment Group

Parks Victoria

Word and Mouth

Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative

Ethnic Council

Goulburn Valley Water

Community representative

Community representative

Community representative

Contents

RiverConnect Strategic Plan 2015-2016 Summary	2
1. Introduction	3
1.1 Where is RiverConnect	3
1.2 Why RiverConnect?	3
1.3 What RiverConnect is	5
1.4 The RiverConnect Strategic Plan	5
2. Vision, purpose and values driving goals and priorities	6
2.1 Vision	6
2.2 Purpose	6
2.3 Values	6
2.4 Long-term goals	7
2.5 Priorities	10
3. The current environment	11
3.1 River environment attributes and issues	11
3.2 Issues and threats identified by community	12
4. How have we been doing – RiverConnect achievements	13
4.1 What difference has RiverConnect made?	13
4.2 RiverConnect Strategic Actions Achievements	14
4.3 Within Action Programs	15
4.4 Action Program progress in detail	18
4.5 IAC Evaluation	24
4.6 RiverConnect linking other strategies	24
5. Action, implementation and evaluation	26
5.1 5-year priorities, targets and actions	26
5.2 Implementation	30
5.3 Monitoring, assessment, review and adaptation	32
Appendix 1 Strategic Plan review process	36

2 | RiverConnect

RiverConnect Strategic Plan 2017-2022 Summary

VISION & PURPOSE

Vision
Connected people, rivers and wetlands.

Purpose
To nurture the community's respect for, use and love of the rivers and wetlands.

The vision and purpose will be achieved by realising long-term goals that increase:

- access to,
- awareness of,
- participation in, and
- care of

the river environment and its cultural heritage, through seven connection priorities for action.

CONNECTION PRIORITIES

impact on one or more of the above long-term goals

5-YEAR TARGETS

for implementing action



1. Introduction

Our rivers bring life to the region and hold a wealth of untapped secrets and opportunities. In the past, Shepparton - Mooroopna communities' appreciation of and engagement with the Goulburn and Broken Rivers have varied. The river systems were largely managed by agencies in isolation, with little connection between these managers or with the community.

The creation of RiverConnect was driven by the desire to develop a strong sense of belonging and connection to our rivers and a more cohesive Greater Shepparton community, supported by an integrated partnership approach to river management. Many agencies, individuals and organisations are involved with the river and its surrounds as landowners, traditional owners, asset managers or in the delivery of environmental planning and works.

And so, in response to the groundswell of interest in the river, RiverConnect was born in 2005. Original partners included Greater Shepparton City Council (GSCC), Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GB CMA), other natural resource groups, and Aboriginal and educational organisations. Together, they supported a multi-agency and whole of community approach to future management of the Goulburn and Broken Rivers and the surrounding Red Gum forests and floodplains (the river environment).

RiverConnect aspires to see the Goulburn and Broken River environments duly recognised as the life and soul of river communities. Over its first ten years, the dynamic concept of RiverConnect has supported a raft of existing and new alliances. These partnerships resulted in activities that inspired the community to increase their appreciation and custodianship of the river as a social, economic, environmental, educational and cultural asset.

RiverConnect has been pivotal in the growing appreciation of the significance of the river environment. The river is a vital artery, supplying water for homes, irrigation, food processing, industry and gardens. It also offers a beautiful and environmentally important backdrop for recreation and is an enormously significant cultural heritage site for the Aboriginal population of the Shepparton area. There continues to be a wealth of untapped secrets and opportunities around the river.

1.1 Where is RiverConnect

The RiverConnect area traditionally covered the river frontages and forest floodplain areas adjacent to the Shepparton-Mooroopna urban zones, broadly within the following limits (refer Figure 1 on next page). The emphasis moving forward is to bring the broader community to the river, so river communities such as Toolamba and Murchison may also be part of the RiverConnect project.

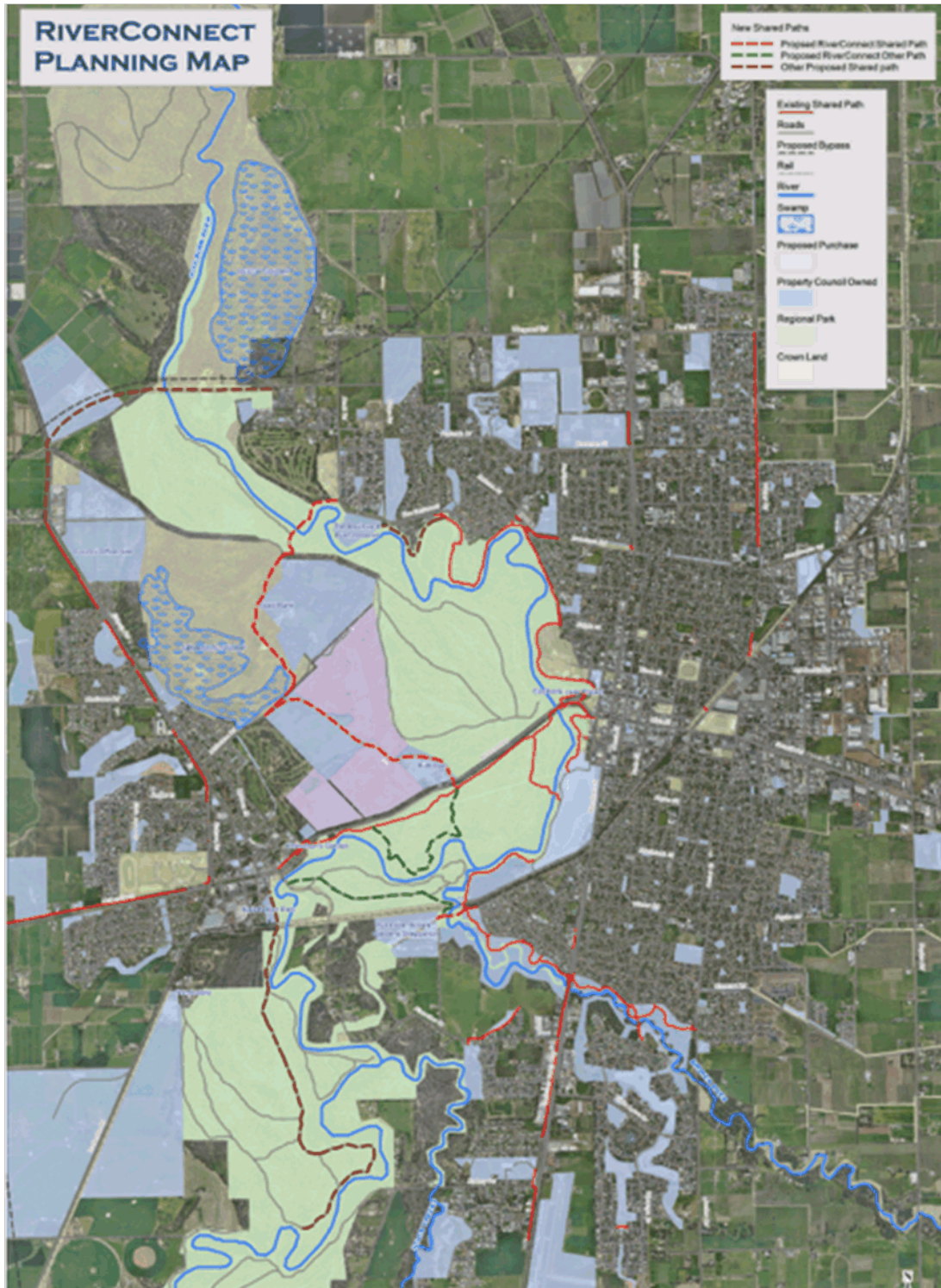
1.2 Why RiverConnect?

A partnership approach has been at the heart of the success of RiverConnect, enabling community and agencies to come together, identify and action shared priorities. This has been supported through a guiding Implementation Advisory Committee, comprising agency and community partners, and working groups focussed on education, land management, communications and Aboriginal action.

Partners in RiverConnect believe:

- there are great opportunities to use the river environment of Shepparton and Mooroopna in promoting people's connectedness with each other, personal connectedness with the natural environment, personal wellness, and community wellbeing
- the resilience of the river environment of the RiverConnect area is challenged by the increasing population, increased usage and occasional poor behaviour and deliberate damage
- there are many people and organisations who have an interest in the RiverConnect area, and there are many benefits from 'joined-up efforts' (working together)
- joined-up efforts require trust and goodwill, and partners understand it takes time and perseverance to build
- risks and opportunities can arise unexpectedly, especially in a multi-stakeholder operating environment, and plans therefore need to be flexible and adaptive
- given the above, working together to achieve the vision is worthwhile.

Figure 1: RiverConnect primary project area



1.3 What RiverConnect is

RiverConnect is working in a complex area; effective, integrated management to achieve better environmental, economic and social outcomes requires high levels of collaboration and cooperation by the parties involved.

RiverConnect is a network, not an organisation, auspiced by Greater Shepparton City Council. The network includes many partners who use, or are responsible for, the river environment in some way.

1.4 The RiverConnect Strategic Plan

The RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC) led the implementation of the first RiverConnect Strategic Plan (2011). The actions put in place through that plan have yielded a range of significant benefits. These include a vibrant educational program, land managers working more closely together to improve the health of the river environment, exciting activities that engage more of the community with the river and further opportunities for the Aboriginal community to recognise, record and share their ancient relationship with the waterways.

RiverConnect has gone a long way to meeting the needs identified in the first strategic plan through the integration of effort brought about by enduring partnerships. This integration has led to RiverConnect attracting funding for a range of exciting projects that continue to connect many parts of the community to the river.

It is now time to renew the strategic plan; to look over the achievements of RiverConnect, reaffirm the vision for the future, and identify, in consultation with existing and new community and agency partners, a new suite of actions to be undertaken to achieve the vision.

As with the first strategic plan, this renewed plan is not a "blueprint" with every future action fully detailed. It is an adaptive plan. Many of the actions will require further investigation to determine their detailed design and feasibility, and implementation of the plan will see further investigations to develop the necessary detail as funding opportunities arise.

Funding for implementation will be determined by each of the partner organisations through their normal budgetary processes, and levels of activity will be dependent on the overall availability of funding in each organisation. Many of the actions will be suitable targets for external funding from State and Federal government sources or philanthropic organisations. A number of the actions in the plan will only proceed if this external funding is available.

This renewed plan continues to provide a high level, integrated strategy to guide the activities of all of the RiverConnect partners. This will ensure a co-ordinated approach to enhancing the environmental, cultural, recreational and economic value of the rivers and will ensure that the available funds are directed to achieve the greatest possible benefit.

This strategic planning document is presented as five sections or chapters:

- an introduction to RiverConnect and the Strategic Plan
- RiverConnect vision, purpose, values, long-term goals and priorities
- About the RiverConnect area; attributes and issues
- documentation of RiverConnect achievements
- actions for the future and implementation guidance, including governance and evaluation

2. Vision, purpose and values driving goals and priorities

The vision and purpose statements are important beacons that articulate key directions for an organisation. The RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee has updated the purpose and vision statements for RiverConnect from the original strategy to reflect current thinking and the direction for RiverConnect in the future.

Values form the operating philosophies or principles that guide an organisation's internal behaviour as well as its relationship with its partners. The values agreed upon by the IAC underpin the way RiverConnect operates and directs how partners work together.

The vision, purpose and values combine to direct a set of long-term goals for RiverConnect. Delivering these goals in a way that meets our values is the reason we are all part of RiverConnect; our purpose. Achievement of these goals will see us meet our vision.

2.1 Vision

The vision for the Shepparton and Mooroopna areas in 2020, when the currently identified RiverConnect programs have been implemented, is summarised below:

Connected people, rivers and wetlands

2.2 Purpose

The purpose of the RiverConnect project encapsulates the reason why RiverConnect exists and is summarised as:

To nurture the community's respect for, use and love of the rivers and wetlands

2.3 Values

As a network of partners collaborating to achieve outcomes in a complex and dynamic setting, the success of RiverConnect depends on an agreed set of operating principles or values. RiverConnect:

- Promotes a **LIGHTER ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT** in the design and delivery of all projects
- Encourages **JOINED-UP EFFORT**, supporting and complementing partners (is not in competition with them) and encouraging joint project ownership via strong partnerships, with a shared understanding of responsibilities
- Is **INCLUSIVE**, encouraging all groups and individuals with a stake in the river environment to be part of RiverConnect; and
- Celebrates **TRADITIONAL OWNERS CONNECTION** with the RiverConnect area and the subsequent **SHARED HISTORY** of the diverse cultural groups from the time of European settlement.

2.4 Long-term goals

The vision and purpose of RiverConnect will be achieved by realising long-term goals that increase:

- access to,
- awareness of,
- participation in, and
- care of

the river environment and its cultural heritage, through seven priorities to direct actions.

► **GOAL: Increase access to the river environment and its cultural heritage**

In order to connect to our river environments and its cultural heritage, the community must be able to access the river in ways that are compatible with their lifestyles. The shared path network is central to this access and will be expanded through implementation and revision of the RiverConnect Paths Master Plan.

There is currently 30 kilometres of shared pathways across the river landscape. Doubling the paths network would create interlinked paths that connect the Mooroopna and Shepparton communities and beyond to the river.

In addition, access to the river's edge and water will be upgraded in strategic locations across the region so that residents can visit the river in reasonable proximity to where they live and provision can be made for improved access for people with families and individuals with a disability.

Directional signage in the urban centre will encourage people to visit the river, and interpretative signage will educate them about the spaces are using

► **GOAL: Increase awareness of the river environment and its cultural heritage**

The Greater Shepparton community has a strong desire to learn and understand more about all aspects of the RiverConnect area. Knowledge and understanding will improve our appreciation of the area and build our connection to the river environment.

RiverConnect already has a strong educational program that involves students using the river environment as an outdoor classroom. How do we ensure the program is continued and expanded to connect more students and teachers?

RiverConnect participation in a range of community events will provide education opportunities for the community. There is also a continued desire to better understand and learn from the rich and diverse legacy of both Aboriginal and European history and culture unique to the region. The strategic plan sets priorities to share this knowledge both within the Aboriginal community and with the wider community.

RiverConnect will continue to engage the community about the many values of the river environment. It will also support these communities to live and interact positively with the active floodplain. The community will, at times, need to face large natural floods, but will also see smaller, over bank flows that will benefit the riverine environment.

► **GOAL: Increase participation in the river environment and its cultural heritage**

In conjunction with improving physical access to the river environment, co-ordinated efforts need to continue to encourage people living locally or visiting to use these areas and connect physically and emotionally. As an example, self-guided tours may be developed for the area and maps could be produced in new and innovative ways to provide information to the community; residents and visitors alike.

Shepparton hosts a range of events and festivals and there is continued encouragement to incorporate activities based in or relating to the RiverConnect area in these events. Investigations are needed to examine the feasibility of new events and activities.

Increased activity can improve physical health and well-being and mental health and well-being can also be strengthened through interacting with the river environment through educational, social, cultural and artistic endeavours.

► **GOAL: Increase care of the river environment and its cultural heritage**

The Goulburn River is the longest river in Victoria, and is one of 18 declared Heritage Rivers in Victoria. The declaration aims to protect public land in particular parts of rivers and river catchment areas in Victoria which have significant nature conservation, recreation, scenic or cultural heritage attributes.

Key environmental and social values that led to recognition of the Goulburn River include:

- Areas with intact understorey in river red gum open forest/woodland, and yellow box and grey box woodland/open forest communities, particularly downstream of Murchison;
- Areas of significant habitat for vulnerable or threatened wildlife including Squirrel Gliders, Large-footed Myotis, Barking March Frogs, Barking Owls and Brush-tailed Phascogales;
- Native fish diversity and Murray Cod habitat
- Canoeing opportunities
- Cultural heritage sites

The quality, diversity and sustainability of the river environment underpin its value to the community. These aspects need to continue to be protected and enhanced through a co-ordinated program of dedicated action and planning.

There needs to be ongoing effort to reduce rubbish dumping in the river and on the floodplain. Actions are required that lead to further improvement to water quality, revegetation and control of pest plants and animals along waterways and timed delivery of environmental flows. Support for the implementation of these actions will have a strong focus on providing opportunities for community participation.

Long-term goals and aspirational targets

Long-term goals are set beyond the life of this Strategic Plan and encapsulate what we want to achieve in the future. The 15 year aspirational targets and performance measures or indicators are listed in Table 1 for each of the long-term goals.

Table 1: RiverConnect Long-term goals, 2030 aspirational targets and performance measures/indicators

Long-term goal	2030 aspirational targets	Performance measures/indicators
Increase access to the river environment and its cultural heritage	30 km of shared path extensions and upgrades, including 2 river crossings	Kilometre of paths and crossings built and improved
	6 new or significantly upgraded direct river-access points and usage spaces, including viewing points	Number of access points and spaces built and improved
	All shared paths include real and virtual signed information on the environment and cultural heritage	Numbers of signed (real and virtual) information
Increase awareness and understanding of the river environment and its cultural heritage	80% of residents know and understand facts about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Traditional Owner's connection with the environment – Development of Shepparton and Mooroopna around the river – Recreation and participation opportunities in the area – Environmental, social and economic value of river environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Regional well-being survey data to understand knowledge and understanding and perception of value – Event/activity participation data – Benchmark and periodic awareness survey needed
Increase participation in the river environment and its cultural heritage	Number of residents spending time in the RiverConnect environment and average time spent by each resident annually is increased by 30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Event participation data – Usage data – Benchmark and periodic usage data needed
Increase care of the river environment and its cultural heritage	Increased extent and quality of native vegetation and water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Area of vegetation, habitat score – Index of Stream Condition – Water quality parameters –turbidity, salinity, dissolved oxygen, pH, stormwater runoff
	Decreased levels of rubbish dumped	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Volumes of rubbish collected from land, gross pollutant traps, rivers and wetlands – Benchmark data needed

2.5 Priorities

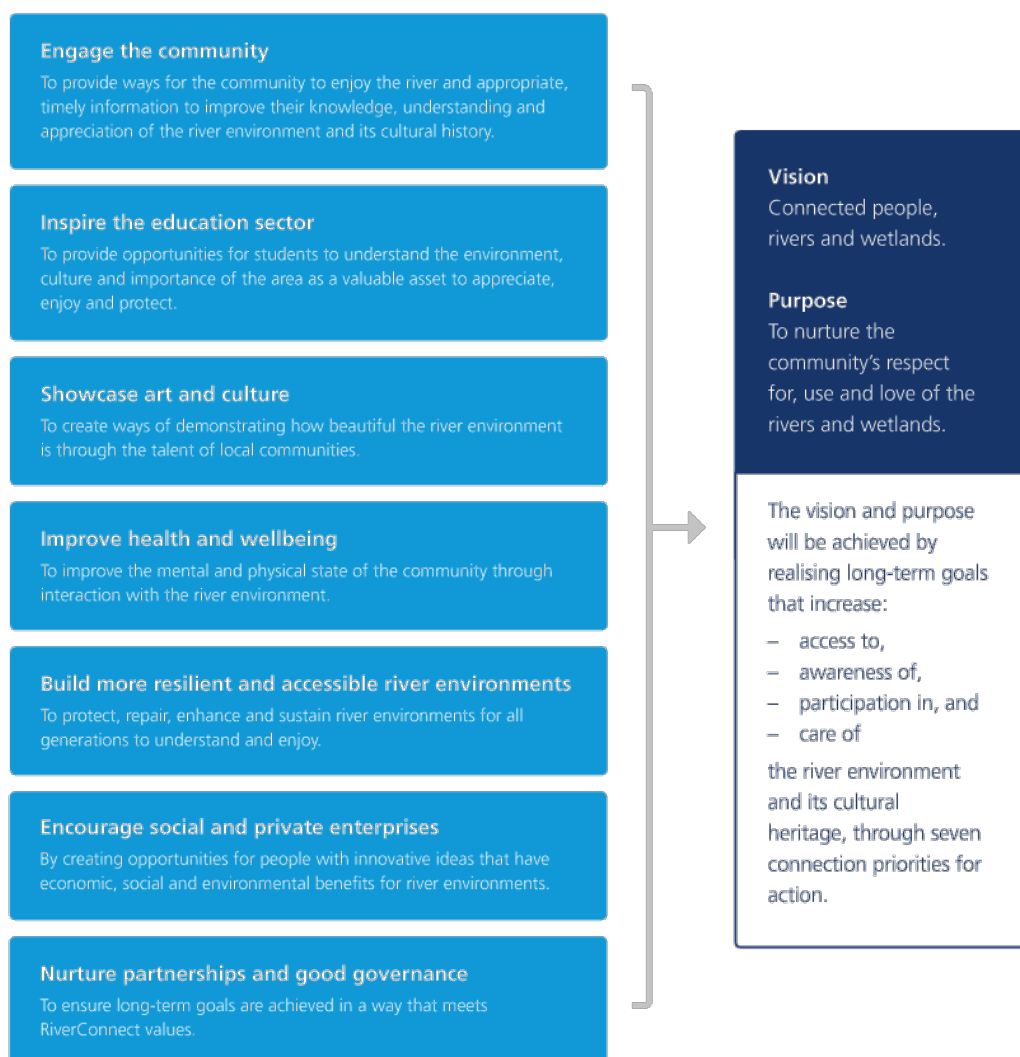
In renewing the Strategic Plan, the RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee considered the needs of the community based on previous studies and consultation with existing and potential partners, together with current understanding of a range of regional issues. This has led to the identification of a series of actions grouped under strategic priorities that will support the RiverConnect purpose and enable achievement of its vision for the region and long-term goals.

Actions are grouped under seven priorities identified by the Implementation Advisory Committee to provide an integrated strategy for RiverConnect for the next five years.

A specific objective has been developed for each priority. The priorities, their objectives and the linkage to delivery of the RiverConnect vision, purpose and long-term goals are shown diagrammatically in Figure 2.

Figure 2 RiverConnect strategic priorities linked to the vision, purpose and long-term objectives

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



3. The current environment

3.1 River environment attributes and issues

The priorities of RiverConnect capture opportunities to protect and enhance key physical and social attributes that enable our river environment to function in ways that bring economic wealth and environmental and social well-being. Key attributes of the RiverConnect area include:

- A diverse urban population
- Rich cultural links
- Enough clean water available for drinking, living, production, recreation and the environment
- A relatively natural river landscape positioned in an urban setting; and
- Strong working partnerships.

The current state of these attributes form the basis for what we wish to protect or enhance from a range of issues and drivers. Attributes and issues are described in more detail below.

Shepparton and Mooroopna are the major population centres within the City of Greater Shepparton. These twin cities sit on either side of the Goulburn River. The Broken River also flows into the Goulburn within the Shepparton urban area. The population of Greater Shepparton is over 61,000 people. The region is home to over 6,000 Indigenous Australians – the largest Aboriginal population in regional Victoria.

The region is also home to a multi-cultural community, with people from all parts of the globe, including India, Afghanistan, Sudan, Italy, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, New Zealand and the Philippines. With these people come many languages, cultures and faiths.

Whilst the community is culturally diverse and drawn from widely differing backgrounds, a common element that unites us is that without the rivers, most of us would not live here. Issues that arise from this diversity relate to different values placed on the river environment by various cultures and subsequent use.

The Aboriginal community has extraordinarily strong links with the rivers and lands that stretch back through the ages. In recent history, Aboriginal people walked off the Cummeragunga mission at Barmah and established settlements in the red gum forest between Shepparton and Mooroopna in an area known as “The Flats”.

The Goulburn and Broken Rivers in Shepparton and Mooroopna are recognised in European history. They were an important source of economic, recreational and social activity in the early days of settlement and underpin what these urban centres are today.

Over the last fifty years, as the focus on utilisation of the area for economic benefit increased and our urban centres grew, the quality of the rivers and their banks has declined. The Goulburn River was redirected away from the Shepparton town area, with complementary buildings and infrastructure removed. Historically, water has overflowed the river banks during high rainfall period and caused flooding impacts on regional infrastructure and communities.

The Goulburn and Broken Rivers are now considered functional working rivers. However, in recent years the beauty, recreational and cultural values of the rivers are being increasingly recognised by the community. Whilst river regulation has decreased how often flood events will occur and how long they will last, flooding has historically, and will continue to be, a part of the landscape. Flooding creates environmental benefits but can also pose a threat to the community.

The Goulburn and Broken Rivers are a source of water for drinking, living, production, recreation and the environment. The environment, industry, residents, service providers and recreational reserves all depend to varying degrees on reliable, good quality supplies of water. At times we have water overflowing streambanks and protecting people and their homes as well as built assets during flood events needs careful planning and management, including warnings of rising river levels and risks. We also need to consider river management in times of drought.

Water quality is impacted on by a range of activities and the key threats in the RiverConnect area include streambank erosion, stormwater and industry runoff, litter and channel modification. The delivery of environmental flows contributes to river environmental health and water quality improvements at the catchment scale and locally, and actions such as installation of gross pollutant traps, improved stormwater management, revegetation of streambanks all improve water quality.

The river environment in the RiverConnect area is seen as unique in terms of its natural state. Despite being situated in the middle of a densely populated urban setting with some resulting change to the vegetation surrounding the river, it has not been as highly modified as river environments in other urban centres. This is largely because of the nature of the floodplain and regularity of flooding, and its protection by reservation of the area as State Forest and utilisation as a timber resource, followed by the National Park declarations. The public land within the RiverConnect area is now under the control of a number of different agencies including Parks Victoria, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Greater Shepparton City Council (GSCC).

The Shepparton Regional Park includes most of the public land adjacent to the rivers which now comes under the management of Parks Victoria. Parks Victoria is also responsible for the management of the Lower Goulburn River National Park which incorporates the former Reedy Swamp Wildlife Reserve. The Yorta Yorta Nation is a key director in the management of major public lands within their traditional country including the entire RiverConnect area. In addition, the GB CMA has overarching responsibilities as caretaker of river health across the region

Litter, weeds and pest animals, vegetation removal and degradation are all issues that threaten the state of the river environment. Floods can provide environmental benefits but also put at risk infrastructure and community safety. Further growth of Shepparton and Mooroopna could increase the risk of these threats to the river environment.

Strong partnerships underpin much of the effort in managing resources in our RiverConnect area. These types of partnerships were first formed back in the 1980's to manage salinity issues at a regional scale. Whilst those partnerships have persisted around the salinity issue, one of the drivers for the formation of RiverConnect was to set up a similar model for river management in an urban setting built on positive relationships, good communication and trust.

We have seen much progress made over time to work with new and existing partners, but an ever present threat to successful partnerships and subsequent action is the misalignment of RiverConnect with partner priorities, organisational structures and funding availability. The loss of individuals in organisations can also affect partner relationships.

3.2 Issues and threats identified by community

Consultation undertaken through RiverConnect with project partners, existing and new, also identified issues that agencies and the community in the Shepparton and Mooroopna areas were concerned about. These consultations confirmed that many people see the RiverConnect area as very important for health and well-being, art and culture, historical significance, environmental features, water supply and recreation. They are concerned about the threats to the local environment including rubbish dumping, water quality, spread of weeds, pest animal species such as Noisy miners and loss of vegetation through developments.

Other key issues that have been identified include Government policy - Lack of consideration of climate change in relation to future water availability and the alignment of policies and strategies developed by local agencies, particularly by the GSCC and GB CMA, with RiverConnect.

4. How have we been doing – RiverConnect achievements

The first RiverConnect Strategic Plan was built upon five strategic priority programs with a total of 167 actions documented:

- Connecting Community (60 actions)
- Connecting Environment (32 actions)
- Connecting Aboriginal People (22 actions)
- Connecting Education (38 actions)
- Communication and Consultation (15 actions)

Annual Reports document achievements and progress against the priority programs of the Strategic Plan and are endorsed by the Greater Shepparton City Council.

4.1 What difference has RiverConnect made?

A partnership approach has been at the heart of the success of RiverConnect, enabling community and agencies to come together and identify and action shared priorities. This is seen as a major achievement for RiverConnect. This has been supported through the guiding Implementation Advisory Committee, comprising agency and community partners, and working groups focussed on education, land management, communications and Aboriginal action.

The IAC is seen as an effective way to share ownership and direction of RiverConnect, supported by project staff. Some working groups have worked better than others, in particular the Communications Working Groups has gone from strength to strength. For other working groups the commitment required to function effectively has not been met over time by the various stakeholders involved in some groups.

RiverConnect has gone a long way to meeting the needs identified 10 years ago through the strong integration of effort brought about through enduring partnerships. This integration has led to RiverConnect attracting funding for a range of exciting projects that continue to connect many parts of the community to the river.

RiverConnect has consistently gone close to achieving its annual objectives, undertaking or participating in many and varied activities that have increasingly engaged the community and schools across the region. Actions have enabled more people to access and use the river environment and have increased their knowledge and understanding of the river and its value to the region. This increased understanding has been further enhanced by the development of a range of print and electronic media resources, all housed at the RiverConnect website.

A particular highlight has been the successful engagement of local schools; every year more and more students have participated in annual or ongoing programs that have seen environmental improvements as well as educational outcomes.

Plans have been completed, access points upgraded, signs installed and information developed. One of the most successful and acclaimed achievements has been the development and delivery of the Flats walking tour and signage, significantly increasing community understanding of local Indigenous history and their connection to the river environment.

Of the 167 actions identified, 45 have not been progressed in any way. As a project that depends on many partners for success, the challenge remains to attract funding to do all that is set out amidst changing government priorities and funding availability.

4.2 RiverConnect Strategic Actions Achievements

Significant achievements

- Regional Achievement and Community Award
- RiverConnect 10 year celebration 2015
- Increased number of partners
- Continued investment and support of GSCC and GB CMA over time
- Increased funding – extension of RiverConnect
- Keep Victoria Beautiful Sustainable Cities Award for Community-Government Partnerships

4.3 Within Action Programs

Within each action program a set of performance measures or indicators were identified to measure delivery against the targets set in the first Strategic Plan. With the large number of actions it has been a challenge to report progress against all the indicators and an abridged number of measures were chosen to show progress annually.

Table 2 shows the targets and indicators for RiverConnect and provides commentary on overall achievements over the life of the first Strategic Plan.

Progress on actions (167 total) over life of first Strategic Plan (2010-2015)

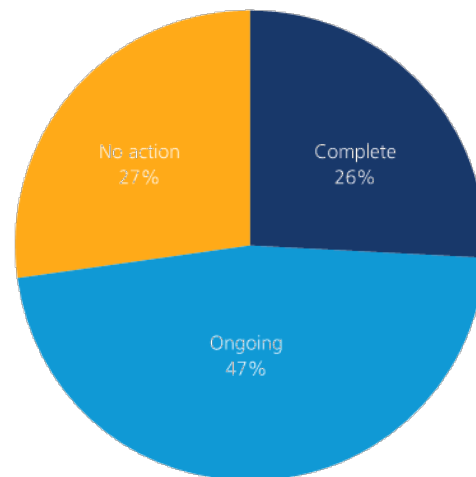


Table 2: RiverConnect targets, performance indicators and achievements

Performance aspect (targets and performance Indicators)	Achievements/progress
1. CONNECTING COMMUNITY	
Improved access to the RiverConnect area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved public access to the rivers - Access path network extensions - Interpretive signage improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved river access at three points through ongoing weir upgrading, boat ramp improvements and Stuart Reserve improvements - RiverConnect Paths Master Plan completion - 3 Flood Markers at Shepparton, Mooroopna and Murchison - Boulevard Bush Reserve and The Flats interpretive signage
Increased community usage of the area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 50% increase in visits to the area, as measured through direct surveys of key access routes and interest points. - Increase in the number of people who use the area as determined through survey of Greater Shepparton community (e.g. Council customer satisfaction surveys). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased number of people using the paths and being around the river through events and activities e.g. Canoeing and other events – 125 events and 6400 participants, 6800 students spent 10,000+ hours at the river
Increased use of the area for events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of new events or existing major events that incorporate a significant RiverConnect component - Increased community participation in events with a RiverConnect element 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 125 community activities including Spotlight walks, canoeing and Kidsfest - 6400 participants in RiverConnect events
2. CONNECTING ENVIRONMENT	
Reduced pollution reaching the river through storm water discharges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Install 3 new gross pollutant traps on key storm water discharge points as identified in Waterway Action Plan. - Reducing trend in amount of litter cleared from traps over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 21 strategies/events contributed to - Rubbish clean up days - VCAL student rubbish collection – 2013/14 24ha, 2014/15 12.2ha - 5 Gross Pollutant Traps (GPT's) installed - Average of 70-80 tonnes p.a. of waste captured in GPT's
Improved water quality in rivers within the RiverConnect area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GB CMA water quality monitoring indicates a reduction in key pollutant inputs within the RiverConnect area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water Quality parameters measured through Waterwatch (since 1995) at Chinamans Bridge Mooroopna and Balaclava Rd Shepparton show no decline in pH, DO, turbidity or EC, possible improvement in EC in last 5 years (compared as annual median)

Performance aspect <i>(targets and performance Indicators)</i>	Achievements/progress
<p>Revegetation of RiverConnect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 90% of planned revegetation works completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tree planting by community groups, VCAL students, school groups, PV, GB CMA - RiverConnect revegetation activities continue to increase through National Tree Day partnership with Greater Shepparton City Council
<p>Improved health of existing vegetation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Habitat scores for selected forest monitoring transects improvement. - Index of Stream Condition score for Goulburn at Shepparton improves over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased value and protection of River environment through parks declaration – extension of RiverConnect - Boulevard Bush Reserve Environmental Management Plan and Action Plan - ISC score for Goulburn River improved between 2004 and 2010 assessments from poor to moderate - Weed and hollow GIS mapping and biodiversity audits along Rivers
<p>Improved health of fauna</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bird numbers and diversity increase at Reedy Swamp. - Numbers of key species increase over time (e.g. squirrel glider). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2016 Goulburn River Shepparton turtle survey identified all local species including Broad-shelled and Murray River turtles – both listed species - Squirrel gliders seen during Spotlight walks have remained consistent over time from 2010/11 to 2014/15 – more than one glider has been seen on average per walk every year, increasing up to more than two glider per walk in 2013/14 - Tree hollow survey Boulevard Bushland Reserve
<p>3. CONNECTING ABORIGINAL PEOPLE</p>	
<p>Increased participation in activities with an Aboriginal component</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least 300 people per year participate in activities with an Aboriginal component. - Participant feedback shows 60% of attendees at activities improved their understanding of aboriginal history and culture issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Flats Walks and signage - 3900 estimated community/students/teachers involved in activities with an Aboriginal component (780/year av)
<p>Improved knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal history and cultural issues in the RiverConnect area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community surveys show increased awareness and understanding of Aboriginal history and cultural issues (for both Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal segments of community). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RiverConnect Festival participant survey shows 40% increase in awareness of Aboriginal history and culture from event

Performance aspect (targets and performance Indicators)	Achievements/progress
4. CONNECTING EDUCATION	
<p>Effective participation by educational institutions in programs and activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 75% of schools in Shepparton and Mooroopna participate in RiverConnect activities each year. - 1000 student visits per year for RiverConnect related activities. - A collection of stories indicates increased student understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Av 65% of schools involved in RiverConnect participate annually in events/activities - 6300 student visits to river over 5 years (av 1260/year) - Increased young people's value of river and river reaches - Adopt a Reach program started 2008 - VCAL Program run over last 5 years, 3-6 schools annually, 50-130 students involved - Regular blogs and stories online on RiverConnect posted by schools
5. COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION	
<p>Improved awareness of RiverConnect programs and activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least 10 RiverConnect related stories per year published in the media. - RiverConnect website registers 3,000 visits per year. - RiverConnect eNewsletter has 250 subscribers. - At least 50% of the community are aware of the RiverConnect program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 65 articles/radio/TV – av 13/year - 41 groups presented to - 18000+ Website visits (site launched May 2011, external visits only recorded post May 2013), av 3600/year - 267 eNewsletter subscribers – 2-3 newsletter produced annually - Many more people know RiverConnect both locally and broader i.e. ANU Arts/Architecture program - Gradual change of people's perception of river

4.4 Action Program progress in detail

4.4.1 CONNECTING COMMUNITY

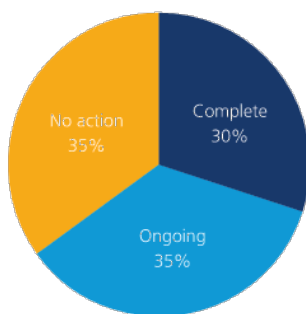
Objective

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.

Significant milestones

- RiverConnect Festival 2012
- Australian National University Art Exhibition 2012
- Goulburn River Access Guide – Shepparton and Mooroopna 2013
- Shepparton – Mooroopna Goulburn River Paths Master Plan 2014
- Murchison, Shepparton and Mooroopna Historical Flood Markers 2014

Progress on actions (60 total) over life of first Strategic Plan (2010-2015)



Performance measures reported annually

Figure 3: Number of Connecting Community events/activities

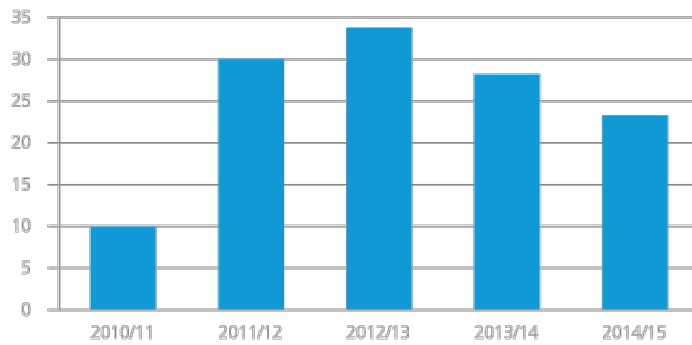
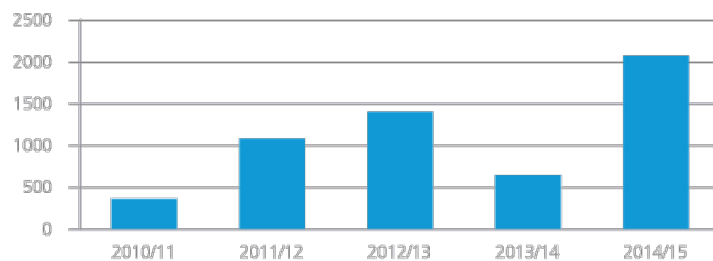


Figure 4: Number of participants in Connecting Community events/activities



Summary

This program has achieved some amazing results over the past 5 years, with 125 events organised, attracting more than 5,500+ community members and 6200 students to the river environment. Activities have included art classes, educational days, tree planting, art exhibitions, festivals and more. Feedback from participants has been positive with people appreciating the opportunities that RiverConnect staff have created to connect them to the river and the associated wildlife.

As well as events and activities RiverConnect has created a number of guides and signs to provide people with information on how to access the river environment and to make their river experiences more enjoyable and informed. One of the most significant achievements has been the development of the Paths Master Plan. This plan sets the priorities to extending and improving the existing river environment shared paths network and will be an important part of planning in the future.

4.4.2 CONNECTING ENVIRONMENT

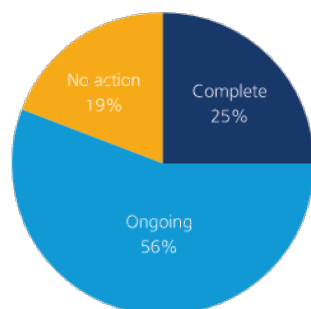
Objective

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.

Significant milestones

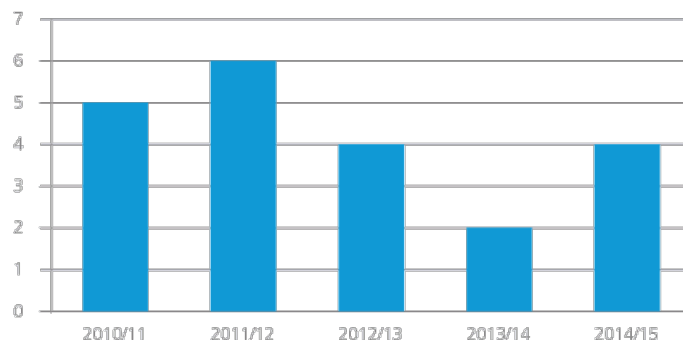
- Work at the weir – continued upgrading including bollard installation
- Stuart Reserve upgrade
- 5 boat ramp upgrades
- VCAL student works – weed management, tree planting, fencing, rubbish collection

Progress on actions (32 total) over life of first Strategic Plan (2010-2015)



Performance measures reported annually

Figure 5: Number of strategies/plans or events



Third Index of Stream Condition assessment for Victorian rivers (2010)

The Victorian Government undertakes periodic review of Victorian waterways, known as the Index of Stream Condition (ISC). Parameters of hydrology, physical form, streamside zone, water quality and aquatic life are measured to contribute to an overall rating of river reaches across the State.

Reach 5 of the Goulburn River is located in RiverConnect area. The overall condition of this reach has improved in its ISC rating from poor (ISC 2005) to moderate (ISC 2010).

Summary

It is difficult to measure environmental condition changes over a relatively short period of time and attribute any improvements to particular projects. River condition indicators can be very climate driven however there does seem to be some changes in condition that show an upwards trend in improvement.

Reserve improvements, access upgrades the installation of gross pollutant traps have all contributed to improving the environment. These actions have been complemented by a range of activities targeting rubbish removal and improving vegetation condition, such as those undertaken regularly by VCAL students, including tree planting.

It has been challenging to manage the ever increasing problem of rubbish in the river environment as populations increase and we encourage more people to access the river. We also need to set in place a method for measuring the impact we are having on the environment through the works done by RiverConnect.

Since 2004, environmental water (other than base and natural flow) entitlements have grown to enable and prioritise in bank flows to be delivered. These flows have been targeted at improving bank vegetation, fish breeding, and habitat and macro-invertebrates. Overbank flows still occur less often than what is needed to maintain the health of the Lower Goulburn River floodplain.

4.4.3 CONNECTING ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

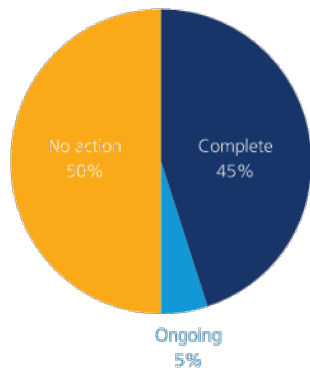
Objective

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.

Significant milestones

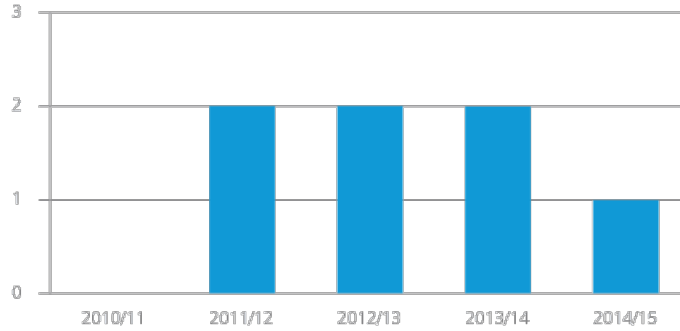
- The Flats signage and booklet recognition through award
- Traditional owner talks at RiverConnect Festival

Progress on actions (22 total) over life of first Strategic Plan (2010-2015)



Performance measures reported annually

Figure 5: Number of events/activities



Summary

One of the most rewarding outcomes of RiverConnect has been the development of the Flats signage and walks. This award winning project provides self-guided and guided tours along the Flats walk for people to learn about a very small part of recent aboriginal history in the region.

Almost 4000 people have been involved in connecting Aboriginal People in events such as traditional cooking, traditional dance workshop and the Flats walks.

Participant surveys from the RiverConnect Festival recorded a 40% increase in awareness of Aboriginal history and culture from the event.

4.4.4 CONNECTING EDUCATION

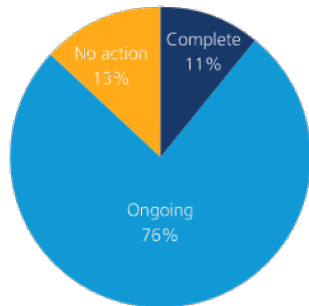
Objective

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.

Significant milestones

- VCAL Partnership Award
- Professional development training for teachers
- Development of education days such as 'Rambling at Reedy' and 'Life at the Lake'

Progress on actions (38 total) over life of first Strategic Plan (2010-2015)



Performance measures reported annually

Figure 7: Student numbers and hours spent at the River with RiverConnect

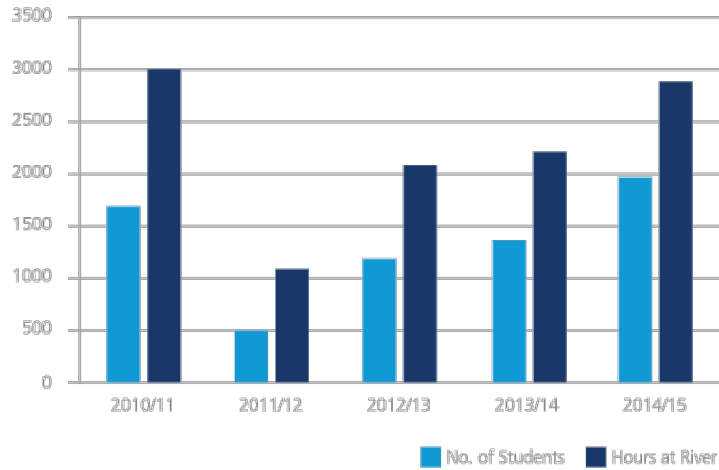
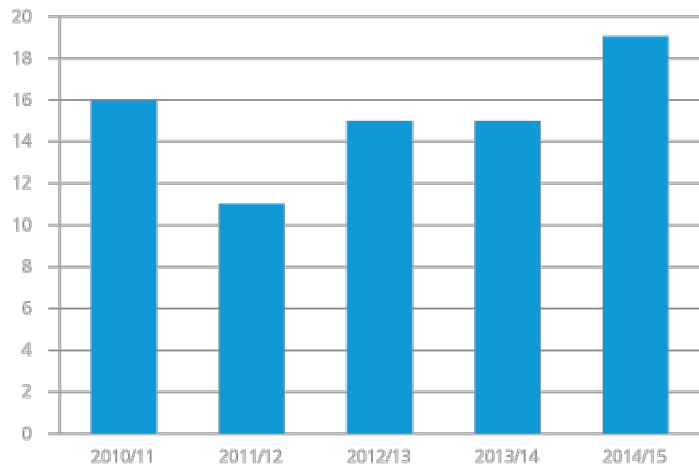
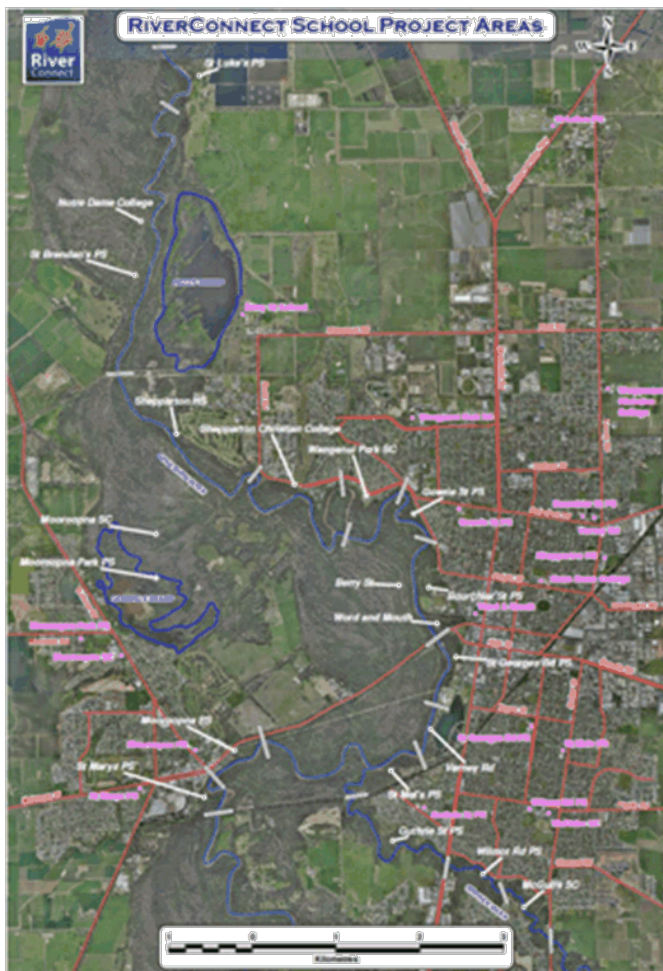


Figure 8: Number of schools visiting the River





Summary

As per the Connecting Community summary the achievements of RiverConnect in this program have been extraordinary and significant in terms of reaching local students and engaging them in the river environment. More than 6300 students have been part of RiverConnect over the past 5 years, involving an average 15 schools visiting the river each year. Figure 1 shows the large number of schools involved in learning more about and enhancing the river environment through the Adopt-a-Reach Program. This has been complemented by a range of events and activities targeting students. The VCAL program has been recognised for its efforts in bringing students to the river on a regular basis to learn and to undertake works.

There have been many partnerships developed amongst environmental educators over the time of the first Strategic Plan. This not only includes local educators but has expanded to regional and metropolitan experts. This has opened up the opportunities for our local schools to engage more intimately with local wildlife such as turtles and bats.

There has been emphasis also on teacher development and the creation of resources to support teachers. Keeping teachers engaged on an ongoing basis has been a challenge and creating opportunities that do not place additional workload pressures on teaching staff is an important consideration. The target education level has been mostly primary and secondary schools to date but recent engagement with kindergartens, children's centres and tertiary students is further expanding this component of RiverConnect.

4.4.5 COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

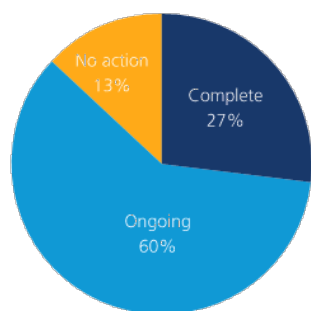
Objective

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

Significant milestones

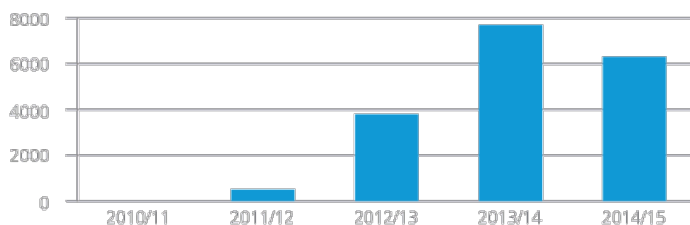
- New RiverConnect branding 2011
- RiverConnect Website created and launched 2011
- Regional Achievement and Community Award
- Poster presentation at International River Symposium 2012
- Presentation to NRM Knowledge Conference 2014

Progress on actions (32 total) over life of first Strategic Plan (2010-2015)



Performance measures reported annually

Figure 10: Website visits



Notes: website first launched May 2011 and from May 2013 only external visits recorded

Figure 11: Marketing campaign – groups presented/spoken to

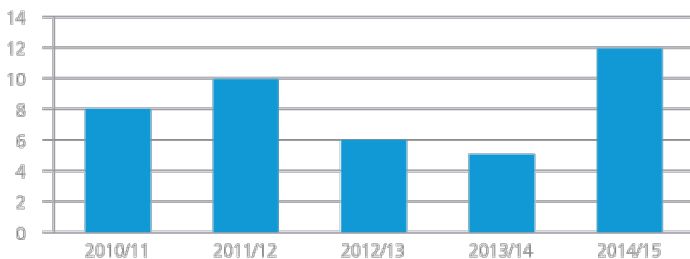
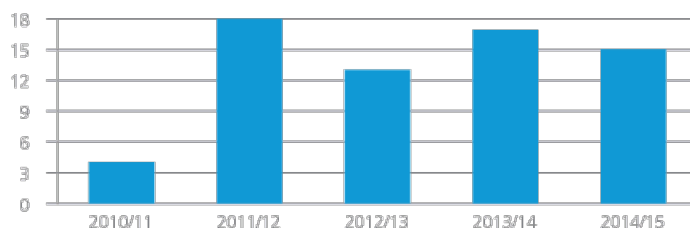


Figure 12: Articles/radio/TV



Summary

The Communication and Consultation program has many achievements, with perhaps its greatest success being the development, continued update and demonstrated use of the RiverConnect website. The website is used not only to store and access information, but to share stories and pictures, provided by schools as well as RiverConnect staff.

RiverConnect has regularly engaged with the community through visits, newspaper articles, radio interviews and television coverage. The continued interest in the members of the Communications and Consultation Working Group demonstrates the commitment to the promotion of RiverConnect.

Consultation has occurred around specific activities, such as the development of the Paths Master Plan, however the River Festival is an event that has not persisted but could possibly be reinvigorated to connect people to the river, celebrate RiverConnect successes and garner ideas for future RiverConnect activities.

4.5 IAC Evaluation

As part of the Strategic Plan review process a survey was undertaken of IAC members. This included agency representatives and community members. A small number of questions were asked to get their perspectives on the success of RiverConnect and improvements for the future, based on their observations and involvement. The results show:

Biggest achievements for RiverConnect

- School engagement – Adopt-a-Reach
- Paths Master Plan
- Strengthening of Partnerships
- Community Engagement
- The Flats Walks and signage

What works well in the RiverConnect project?

- Hands on activities
- In the field learning
- Collaboration on projects
- Involving the community
- Project coordination and management
- Engagement activities (spotlights, canoeing)
- Website

What is the perception of RiverConnect in the community?

- Low awareness by wider community
- Positive for those that are aware of it
- Lack of awareness outside Shepparton/Mooroopna

What could be improved?

- An increase in funding for projects
- More community buy-in
- Clearer roles and responsibilities of partner organisations
- Ground staff/labour – not relying on volunteers for education sessions
- Strategic level cooperation
- Partnership with tertiary institutions
- More path connections
- Partnerships could be better communicated – need to recognise all partners
- Celebration of Shepparton and Mooroopna as river towns
- Students involved in monitoring and recording
- Better advertising of events

4.6 RiverConnect linking other strategies

The RiverConnect Strategic Plan is not a typical organisational plan, reflecting the fact that RiverConnect is a network of organisations and individuals rather than being an organisation itself.

The Strategic Plan therefore:

- has a large degree of in-built flexibility (through an annual review process)
- lists actions that support or contribute to the achievement of partner organisational strategies
- acknowledges that while the listed aspirations and actions listed in the plan are expected to align with partners, they will not all be relevant to all partners
- has aspirations and actions that are expected to guide progress rather than be prescriptive.

Key strategies for RiverConnect

Alignment with the strategies and plans of partners is critical to make sure RiverConnect:

- delivers actions that contribute to the implementation of these strategies
- negotiates roles and responsibilities of delivery agents (e.g. asset management in the Regional Park)
- can increase the region's ability to attract investment (and bring investment directly to RiverConnect to contribute to implementation)
- is able to represent the views and needs of the community
- influences strategic priorities
- can continue to build on a well-established successful partnership model

There are a number of strategies and action plans with which RiverConnect is aligned but the four major current strategies sit with the GSCC, GB CMA, PV and DELWP. RiverConnect's relationship with these is presented in Figure 13.

Specific plans that are developed and implemented by RiverConnect partners include:

- Council Plan 2013-2017 (GSCC)
 - Greater Shepparton Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2014-2030 (GSCC)
 - Shepparton Stormwater Management Plan (GSCC)
 - CBD Strategy (GSCC)
 - Public Health Plan (GSCC)
- Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2036 (DELWP) – to be finalised
- Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy 2013-2019 (GB CMA)
 - Goulburn Broken Waterway Strategy 2014-2022 (GB CMA)
 - Goulburn Broken Regional Floodplain Management Strategy (Interim) 2014-2016
 - Goulburn Broken Water Quality Strategy 1996-2016
- River Red Gum Park Management Plan – Parks Victoria – to be finalised
- Water for Victoria Plan (DELWP)

Figure 13: RiverConnect's relationship with major strategic plans



5. Action, implementation and evaluation

We recognise RiverConnect achievements and also where it has not performed as was planned. Whilst we understand that the first Strategic Plan had many priorities to address, one challenge in plan implementation was reporting against the large number and detail of actions. With input from the IAC and partners, through the renewal process, we have redefined the priorities, some are ongoing, some with new emphasis, and simplified the actions and measures to direct implementation and monitor performance and impact in the short and long term.

5.1 5-year priorities, targets and actions

Table 3 identifies a suite of high-level actions with targets and performance measures or indicators grouped under the strategic priorities. The last table column suggests the types of events, activities, planning and products that could be designed and delivered through each action on an annual basis. These are examples only. An annual planning process and review process will enable RiverConnect to be agile and adaptive, responding to needs and funding availability in ways that align with strategic priorities.

Table 3 RiverConnect 5-year priorities, targets and actions

5 year targets	Action	Lead agencies	Example activities
PRIORITY: ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY			
25% increase in use of shared pathways	1. Encourage use of the river environment	GSCC, PV, GSCC RiverConnect	Update access map of the RiverConnect area highlighting path network, and historical and cultural sites
25% increased participation in river environment activities	2. Improve access and usage for 'at risk' groups, including disadvantaged youth	GSCC RiverConnect, IAC	Work with local service providers to implement activities that target disadvantaged youth
75% decrease in volume of dumped rubbish	3. Celebrate the river environment through events	GSCC RiverConnect, Word and Mouth	Incorporate RiverConnect aspects into existing events e.g. Clean Up Australia Day, Kidsfest
	4. Educate about and involve the community in the river environment through electronic and print media	Communications WG, GSCC, GB CMA, GMW, GVW, PV, GSCC RiverConnect	Build on and enhance public education programs on water use, quality, flooding and environmental flows in the Goulburn and Broken Rivers
	5. Increase community awareness on appropriate behaviour in the river environment	Communications WG, PV, GSCC, GB CMA, GV Water, DELWP, GSCC RiverConnect	Campaigns could include activities such as vehicle use, camping, campfires, dogs, collecting firewood and rubbish disposal

5 year targets	Action	Lead agencies	Example activities
PRIORITY: INSPIRE THE EDUCATION SECTOR			
50% of Greater Shepparton schools have at least one class visit the river environment annually, involving 1,000 students 1 tertiary education project in the RiverConnect area	1. Create opportunities for schools to participate in on-site river activities	GSCC RiverConnect, GSCC, GMLN, Department of Education, PV	Extend Adopt-a-Reach, Bug Blitz
	2. Develop links between schools and community resources, including land managers and agency officers	GSCC RiverConnect, GMLN, GVW	Work with the Historical Society to connect the European cultural connections to the river environment for students
	3. Facilitate opportunities to develop curriculum materials that are relevant to primary, secondary and tertiary education needs	GSCC RiverConnect, GMLN, Department of Education, universities, GVW	Identify RiverConnect projects for senior/student students that meet curriculum needs and contribute to understanding of the river environment
	4. Enable students to contribute to river environment improvements	GSCC RiverConnect, PV	VCAL activities, tree planting days
PRIORITY: SHOWCASE ART AND CULTURE			
1000 participants annually in traditional owner-led events in the river environment Significant whole-of-community events and projects celebrate our shared history and river-inspired creativity	1. Promote the RiverConnect area as an event and activities location	GSCC, GSCC RiverConnect, Word and Mouth	Investigate with Word and Mouth a youth focused music festival to be held in a river/forest setting
	2. Understand Aboriginal history in the RiverConnect area	GSCC RiverConnect, Rumbalara, Yorta Yorta, Communications WG	Expand the story of the Cummeragunja Walk-off and life on the Flats. e.g. "Evenings with the Elders" program to share knowledge
	3. Connect with Aboriginal and European culture and community involvement	GSCC RiverConnect, Rumbalara, Yorta Yorta	Stage a Corroboree event to showcase Aboriginal dance, music and culture Develop European settlement history story and display along the river walking paths
	4. Create a RiverConnect "home" for cultural and Interpretive information	IAC, GSCC RiverConnect	Work with the SAM development to incorporate a RiverConnect centre/home
	5. Create programs that blend environmental and creative elements	GSCC RiverConnect, Gallery Kaiella, Word and Mouth, universities	Investigate creating art installations from rubbish collected in gross pollutant traps

5 year targets	Action	Lead agencies	Example activities
PRIORITY: IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING			
<p>Shared path network is extended by 9km and 1 river crossing is built</p> <p>Opportunities and spaces are created that actively used by residents and visitors</p>	1. Implement the Paths Master Plan	GSCC, Parks Victoria, GB CMA	
	2. Build healthy living programs that incorporate the river environment	GSCC RiverConnect, GSCC	<p>Work with GV Health to develop and implement a healthy living program with businesses and local community</p> <p>Create opportunities for activities such as 'yoga by the river'</p>
	3. Develop active living activities/opportunities for residents and visitors to do in the river environment	GSCC RiverConnect, GSCC, Park Victoria	<p>Create walking, cycling, canoeing tours of the area</p> <p>Build an exercise circuit along the paths network</p>
	4. Develop a river master plan for Shepparton	GSCC	
	5. Facilitate and auspice large-scale river environment projects	GSCC, IAC	Implement the Eastbank Lake project
PRIORITY: BUILD MORE RESILIENT AND ACCESSIBLE RIVER ENVIRONMENTS			
<p>Extent and quality of native vegetation and water quality is maintained and improved where possible</p> <p>Access for various sectors, from anglers to the elderly, is increased at five locations</p>	1. Contribute to development and implementation of relevant plans and programs to manage and improve the river environment	GB CMA, GSCC, PV, DELWP	Support and assist with messaging (eg signage) to improve community understanding and acceptance of environmental flows
	2. Improve access to and management of access to the river	PV	Upgrade pedestrian, disabled and boating access to river at key sites as per developed access master plan
	3. Identify and build suitable event/activity sites along the river	PV, GSCC	Identify sites, develop plans and build sites such as marquee sites, toilets, camping areas) and develop guidelines for groups wishing to use the area.
	4. Clean up the RiverConnect area	PV, GSCC, GB CMA, GSCC RiverConnect	<p>Initiate rubbish removal projects in priority areas identified by PV, GSCC and GB CMA</p> <p>Hold annual community "Clean-up RiverConnect" event in conjunction with Clean-up Australia Day activities</p>
	5. Improve water quality in the RiverConnect area	EPA, GV Water, GB CMA, GMW, GSCC	Install rubbish collection pontoons in Goulburn River at Shepparton
	6. Revegetate RiverConnect priority areas	PV, GB CMA, GSCC RiverConnect	Rehabilitate and revegetate key riverside areas

5 year targets	Action	Lead agencies	Example activities
PRIORITY: ENCOURAGE SOCIAL AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE			
One example each of a social and private enterprise associated with RiverConnect aspirations	1. Support innovative business ideas from the community	GSCC	Encourage the attraction or establishment of a bike and/or canoe hire business
	2. Encourage tourists to visit the area	GSCC	Engage with tourism groups to develop river/red gum tourism opportunities Develop RiverConnect tourism marketing plan
	3. Develop a regional tourism plan for RiverConnect that links in with broader tourism plans	Communications WG	Work with GSCC and local tourism/promotional groups to incorporate RiverConnect into tourism plans for area
PRIORITY: NURTURE PARTNERSHIPS AND GOOD GOVERNANCE			
Key stakeholders continue to endorse and support the partnership and governance arrangements of RiverConnect Funding levels 'won' (and shared), from government and 'non-traditional' sources RiverConnect is accountable and adaptive	1. Implement processes to ensure ongoing organisational support for RiverConnect	IAC	All RiverConnect partner organisations will include formal processes in their decision making and planning activities to ensure consistency and alignment with the RiverConnect vision and objectives, wherever possible
	2. Encourage broader participation in RiverConnect	Communications WG	Start up a 'Friends of' group Create A RiverConnect Ambassador's Program
	3. Implement a marketing plan to attract more funding to RiverConnect	Communications WG	Develop a plan that includes active partnerships with key media to inform community of RiverConnect actions
	4. Implement, monitor and adapt RiverConnect to reflect plan progress, needs and funding	IAC, GSCC, GB CMA	Set indicators for measuring progress against targets Continue to create an annual work plan and provide an Annual report to all stakeholders Develop reporting tools
	5. Provide expert input and advocacy for partners and community to strategies, plans and large-scale projects that impact on river environment	IAC, GSCC RiverConnect	MDB Constraints Strategy implementation

5.2 Implementation

5.2.1 GOVERNANCE

In order to bring all the parties together to work towards a co-ordinated plan for the revitalisation of our rivers, the RiverConnect project, through the first Strategic Plan, developed clear governance arrangements to ensure that all the key stakeholders involved were represented and had access to appropriate forums to bring forward their issues for consideration. The current structure has worked with greater and lesser success during plan implementation over the last five years. Some of the key strengths and weaknesses are:

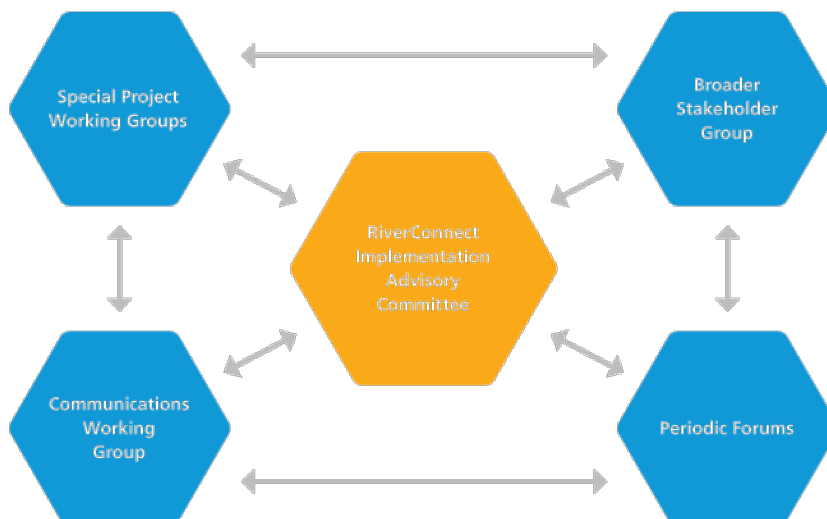
- Members of the IAC from key stakeholders in GSCC and GB CMA in particular, have been Directors/Mayor and senior officers. This has lifted the profile of the project within those key organisations and provided representatives who can commit their organisation to action.
- Strong attendance at IAC meetings has persisted over time, with community members continuing to nominate and contribute to meetings.
- The working group structure has been effective for some priority programs, providing a forum to co-ordinate actions on the ground and to ensure consistent approaches from all stakeholders. This sharing of information, skills and the alignment of actions between organisations involved is a significant benefit flowing from the RiverConnect project, which was very important when RiverConnect began. But now this needs to be more adaptive with working groups coming and going as required.

Building on the strengths and weaknesses of the current governance arrangements is seen as highly desirable, so a modified structure is proposed to govern and manage implementation of the next iteration of the RiverConnect Strategic Plan (see Figure 14).

Implementation of the agreed actions will be managed directly by the nominated lead agency. The key functions to be undertaken through RiverConnect Project implementation includes:

1. Oversight of implementation activities.
2. Assessing progress against objectives and monitoring of actual performance against agreed measures.
3. Program accountability through preparation of annual reports on achievements against the plan.
4. Review and adaptation of the plan to modify priorities or strategies where objectives are not being achieved, or in light of changing circumstances or new information.
5. Undertaking community consultation and seeking community feedback to ensure that the plan and actions being implemented continue to meet community needs effectively.
6. Co-ordination of implementation activities between various partners organisations, including communications and promotional activities, to maximise impact and avoid duplication.

Figure 14: Implementation governance structure



Key features of this structure include:

RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC)

This will continue to be a high level, strategic forum responsible for providing advice, identifying strategic links within their organisations, obtaining project buy-in and coordinating major projects from their organisations perspective. Delivery of the first five functions from the list above.

Members to be drawn from:

- Greater Shepparton City Council (2)
- Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (2)
- Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative
- Parks Victoria
- Goulburn Murray Landcare Network
- Goulburn Valley Environment Group
- Word and Mouth
- Goulburn Valley Water
- Ethnic Council
- Community representatives (4)

The Implementation Advisory Committee will be responsible for regular community input forums designed to inform the community on progress and receive input to guide annual implementation activities.

Broader Stakeholder Group

This group is proposed to be an electronic communication forum to keep stakeholders not involved in the IAC up to date about the progress of RiverConnect implementation and to seek interest and expertise when forming major project working group membership.

Working Groups

The two types of working groups are:

- Communications Working Group - the key ongoing group where the communication and engagement skills and expertise of the partner organisations and the community can be brought together to address the detail needed to effectively design, share and deliver key communication activities of RiverConnect
- Special Project Working Groups – working groups with a defined life period that will be responsible for developing detailed plans and priorities for major projects involving multiple but variable stakeholder representatives, depending on need. These working groups will be making appropriate recommendations to the Implementation Committee on the progress of major projects until they run independently, are complemented or are auspiced directly under RiverConnect implementation. Membership will include relevant stakeholders.

At least one member of the RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee will be on all working groups. Wherever possible, working groups should be convened by a member of the RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee. All working groups will seek advice from the Aboriginal representatives on the IAC.

Community Input Forums

These forums will be held periodically across the Shepparton and Mooroopna area. They will be designed and facilitated to provide regular progress reporting to the community on implementation and to provide an opportunity for ongoing community input to the implementation and further development of the Strategic Plan. These forums will also be supplemented with specific community consultation on key projects as they are developed.

The implementation structures and the expectations and obligations of partner organisations will be clearly documented through the RiverConnect Terms of Reference. A public process for partner organisations and IAC/WG members to “sign-on” to these arrangements will provide a strong legitimacy for the role and operation of the governance arrangements.

5.2.2 IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM AND FUNDING

The Goulburn Broken CMA currently contributes \$100,000 per year towards funding project staff and other project costs and this funding is matched by GSCC, who manage the day to day operation and support for RiverConnect.

It is proposed that the GB CMA contribution should continue at the same level for a four year period (as set by the Victorian Government funding guidelines) and GSCC match funding to provide staffing resources for implementation.

Current staffing roles are outlined in Table 4 but needs should be reviewed in light of any additional project funding, work planning and workload assessment.

5.3 Monitoring, assessment, review and adaptation

Monitoring progress and adapting the plan are critical activities for the RiverConnect IAC to oversee. This section outlines the monitoring and evaluation program that enables:

- the effectiveness of this Strategic Plan to be determined
- this Strategic Plan to adapt quickly to changed circumstances and needs.

5.3.1 THE ADAPTIVE NATURE OF THE PLAN

The plan is not a ‘blueprint’ with every future action fully detailed. Many of the actions listed might be completed by a wide range of stakeholders and might require further investigation to determine their detailed design and feasibility. There is little value in developing detailed designs for projects that might not happen for five years, or which might ultimately be undertaken by partners who unexpectedly become well positioned.

Essential features of the plan are therefore regular reviews to ensure current opportunities are captured, and targeted and timely community consultation to develop and refine project proposals. Detailed actions and activities are more appropriately developed on an annual basis, with input from the IAC and community through the governance structure described earlier. Reporting achievements against annual action plans and long-term goals to the IAC becomes an integral part of the planning and review processes (Figure 15).

Figure 15: RiverConnect IAC planning and review process



5.3.2 MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCESSES

Monitoring and evaluation are prone to becoming unwieldy and therefore futile if they are not rigorously focused. Monitoring and evaluation of this plan focuses on three critical and connected levels, which will drive short and long-term performance and adaptation of this plan (Table 5).

Table 5: Logic to drive short and long-term performance and adaptation

Evaluation level	Key evaluation question	Evidence to inform evaluation	
		Parameter monitored	Data
1. Annual performance	How did we go this year against what we said we would do?	Activities (listed in annual plan) completed against funds received, such as those from the GB CMA and GSCC Action examples: – Conduct 50 school (class) visits to the river environment – Conduct 10 spotlight walks	– Usage information – Paths built and access points improved – Information material developed, including signage and educational – Media activities and website usage – Numbers and types of events organised or participated in – Number of participants in events – Satisfaction surveys and stories about participation – Number of schools and students participating – Activities, hours and outputs achieved by students – Numbers of plans contributed to – Completed works e.g. tree planting – Monitoring activities eg bird counts, rubbish collected – Meeting involvement – Major project progress
	2. Long-term strategy implementation progress (5 years)	What progress has been made in implementing what we said we would do when the plan was written? How effective were the actions?	Actions (listed in Strategic Plan) completed by all partners, regardless of fund source Action example: – Encourage tourists to visit the river environment Progress towards 5-year targets (listed in Table 3)
3. Vision realisation (15-year horizon)	What progress has been made towards vision?	Progress towards the four long-term goals (Table 1)	– Participation numbers (total of all years)
	Have circumstances changed sufficiently to warrant change in the strategic directions?	Examples: – Institutional changes (especially for partners) – Government and other funding priority changes	Anecdotal evidence, discussion papers, meeting papers, etc.
	Do the priorities for action next year need to change?	All of the above	All of the above

5.3.3 REPORTING

While data is expected to be gathered continually during plan implementation, reporting timeframes vary for each evaluation level.

Evaluation level	Report to RiverConnect IAC
Annual performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Update every RiverConnect IAC meeting (anticipated to be every two months) – Complete report (including quantitative data and stories) and present to IAC in August prior to major planning reset in October each year
Long-term strategy implementation progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Report on progress annually, prior to major planning reset in November each year – Complete report as part of strategy review at the end of this plan update (in five years)
Vision realisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Report on progress and other evaluation questions annually – Complete report as part of strategy review at the end of this plan update (in five years)

5.3.4 DATA, DATA GAPS AND BENCHMARKING

While measuring progress towards some of the 5-year and long-term goals (Table 3 and Table 1) will require new data gathering and benchmarking, it is likely that several partners will have existing monitoring processes that RiverConnect can 'piggyback' on or complement. Targets have been chosen and designed to capitalise on mutual benefits and create efficiencies.

The detailing of specific performance measures and data requirements is a task to be completed early in the life of this 5-year plan.

Appendix 1: Strategic Plan review process

The review of the RiverConnect Strategic Plan was directed by the IAC, with guidance from a small working group of GSCC and GB CMA staff and IAC community representatives.

Stage 1 IAC direction setting	
May 2015	Member survey
June 2015	Workshop 1: Achievements and assessment
August 2015	Workshop 2: Future priorities and governance
Stage 2 Partner (existing and potential) coffee catch ups to inform plan	
Jan 2015- June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goulburn Murray Landcare Network - Greater Shepparton City Council - Light House - Rumbalara - Gallery Kaiella - Word and Mouth - U3A - Shepparton Historical Society - Goulburn Valley Water - Aboriginal Partnerships Officer – Council - Parks Victoria - Shepparton Art Museum - Committee for Greater Shepparton - Education sector - Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation - GV Health - Shepp Show Me - VER Fish - Ethnic Council
Stage 3 Plan drafting	
April - August 2016	Presentation to IAC June 2016 and review by members July/August 2016
Stage 4 presentation to Council	
TBD	
Stage 5 broader community consultation	
TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community group catch ups - Open house conversations - Draft available for comment - Partner sign on
Stage 6 Council endorsement	
TBD	Launch

We would like to thank all the people who contributed to the review and development of the second of what we hope will be many RiverConnect Strategic Plans.

