



**GEORGES RIVER COMBINED  
COUNCILS' COMMITTEE INC.**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09**

# GRCCC MEMBER COUNCILS



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## PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD



The GRCCC continues to deliver great results for the environment and member Councils. Welcome to the annual report for the 2008-09 financial year which details the activities of the GRCCC and its projects. As our operations and responsibilities expanded, we have ensured the governance structure of the Committee met high expectations of accountability and transparency.

This has been a transition year. The local government elections in September 2008 saw the retirement of a number of Councillors who had given service to the GRCCC. We farewelled two members of the Executive: Councillor Richard McLaughlin from Bankstown City Council and Councillor Norman Jew from Wollondilly Shire Council.

Their efforts and commitment will be missed. In compensation, newly elected Councillors from diverse backgrounds and communities throughout the catchment joined the Committee and offered their enthusiasm and experience.

During the year, the GRCCC concluded its hosting period with Liverpool City Council and moved east to Hurstville City Council. The smooth transition was due to the professional and diligent leadership of Ali Hanlon, GRCCC Executive Officer, Sandra Kubecka, Liverpool's Manager of Recreation & Open Space and Ian Curtis, Hurstville's Manager Environmental Sustainability. Thank you Ali, Sandra and Ian – your efforts were greatly appreciated.

I would also like to thank the council officers who have supported the GRCCC this year by participating in meetings, workshops and other activities. The sharing of information and expertise between member Councils, various government agencies and community groups creates a synergy that defines the GRCCC's coordination role and reputation.

The GRCCC's Management & Implementation Plan provides ongoing direction and priorities for our programs consistent with the NSW Government's State Plan and regional plans such as those of the Sydney Metropolitan CMA and local councils. With over \$6 million of grant funds at work along the entire length of the Georges River, the GRCCC is delivering on its commitment to rehabilitate and preserve the river.

One of the highlights of the year was working with the talented project managers of the Mid and Upper Georges River Urban Sustainability Initiatives, staff from member Councils and other stakeholders to design and develop the new Georges River Website. This website is a long awaited resource. Please take the time to check it out and let us know your thoughts.

This Annual General Meeting concludes five years of my presidency of the GRCCC. It has been a privilege to serve the Committee and I offer my support to the incoming Executive.

***Cr Lesa de Leau***  
***President GRCCC***



## EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



This year has been an exciting and challenging one for the GRCCC. During the past 12 months the Executive Group focused on consolidation and planning as we established the new programs and cluster groups that were scheduled for implementation within the GRCCC's the new Management and Implementation Plan.

This time-consuming process saw the establishment of the River Ecosystems Program Cluster group and the development of the program scoping brief (which was expanded to include the Stormwater Management Program). The Finance and Administration Cluster Group, Estuarine Management Group, Riverkeeper and Education and Media Communications program groups were also established and have been active during the past year. The outcomes and highlights of these groups during 2008-09 are presented within this report.

The 2008-09 year was the first year of operation for our new structure which saw the creation of the GRCCC Executive Group. The Executive Group consists of the President, Vice President, Treasurer / Public Officer, Host Council Manager and GRCCC Executive Officer. The GRCCC Executive meets once a month to prepare recommendations relating to policy and operational procedure to present to the GRCCC. During the year the Executive focused on the development of best practice policies which included a Code of Conduct, Procurement Policy and Terms of Reference for the Executive Group. These policies were endorsed by the GRCCC in August 2008. In addition, the Executive oversaw a free review for GRCCC which saw the activation of the Finance and Administration Cluster Group. The outcomes of this review will be presented within this report. The Executive Group also worked to ensure there was minimal disruption to our operations as a result of our Host Council transfer to Hurstville City Council.

The Executive Group worked with the Education and Media Communications Cluster Group and Program Managers of the Mid, Upper and Lower Sustainability Initiatives to develop the consultants brief and review tenders for the design and build of the new Georges River Website. The BlueArc Group was appointed to build the website and the cluster group worked with BlueArc during the design and construction phase. Training sessions on the content management system were run for all GRCCC technical officers and the site was launched in October of this year. More details on this exciting website will be provided in the next Annual Report.

It was a very successful year for the GRCCC in securing Federal and State Government grant funding for our projects. The GRCCC was a key stakeholder in Lower Georges River Sustainability Initiative (LGRSI) grant which was awarded nearly \$2 million towards from the NSW Environmental Trust towards the preparation of a sustainability plan to manage rehabilitation of the lower Georges River. The LGRSI will fund the employment of a GRCCC Community Engagement Officer who will oversee the GRCCC's Media and Communication Program, Georges River Website and work with the LGRSI, MGRSI and UGRSI to develop a communications program that is consistent across the catchment.



The GRCCC also received \$210,000 in funding from the Federal Government's Caring for our Country Program for our Riverhealth Monitoring Program and \$40,000 from the Department of Environment and Climate Change towards the next stage of the Estuary Management Plan for the Georges River.

The GRCCC played a key role on the Steering Committees of the Lower, Mid and Upper Georges River Urban Sustainability Initiatives as well as the newly announced Improving Prospect Creek Urban Sustainability Steering Committee. The GRCCC also joined the Steering Committee of the Kurnell 2020 Project.

In summary 2008-09 has been a year of positioning ourselves for the successful delivery of our M&I Plan. We look forward to bringing you details of the exciting outcomes that have already been achieved since June 30, 2009, in next year's Annual Report.

***Alison Hanlon***  
***GRCCC Executive Officer***





# GRCCC PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## GEORGES RIVERKEEPER



### End of Financial Year Statistical Summary

<b>Rubbish Collected (kgs)</b>	<b>93,282</b>
Area weeded (square metres)	75,469
Total sum of plantings	28,498
Total cars removed	18
Total person days	4537

See **Appendix 4** for a list of meetings and other activities for the Riverkeeper.

### New Georges River Barge

In April 2009, the GRCCC officially launched the new Georges Riverkeeper Work Barge with Mr Alan Ashton MP, Member for East Hills at the Georges River National Park. NSW Maritime supplied the work barge to the GRCCC to assist with the access to and removal of pollution from the waterway and foreshore area of the Georges River. The work barge remains the property of NSW Maritime.



**Above:** Georges River barge stored at Georges River National Park

### Sites within GRCCC members' Local Government Area that were maintained as part of the ongoing maintenance roster in 2008-09

#### CAMPBELLTOWN

Ingleburn Weir  
Milton Park  
Freers Crossing

#### HURSTVILLE

Cypress Ave, Lugarno

#### KOGARAH

Dova Park

#### BANKSTOWN

Garrison Point Boom  
Georges Hall  
Kelso Dam  
Lansdown Park  
Alfords Bridge surrounds  
Lamberth Park  
Deep Water Motor Boat Club  
Monash Reserve

#### WOLLONDILLY

Kennedy Creek



## **FAIRFIELD**

Floyd Bay

## **ROCKDALE**

Airport Beach

Assistance on Cooks River as required

## **LIVERPOOL**

Angle Park

Blackmuscat Park

Chipping Norton Lakes Islands

Flower Power Boat Ramp

Haigh Park

Hind Park Reserve

Heron Park

Hoxton Park

Homestead Park

Wattle Grove

## **SUTHERLAND**

Albert Delards Reserve

Alfords Point Bridge surrounds

Burnum Burnum Reserve

Captain Cook Drive

Carina Reserve

Drysdale Place, Kareela

Gwawley Cres

Gwawley Park

Mill Creek

Oyster Bay

Port Hacking Reserve

Tom Ugly's Bridge surrounds

Sandy Point Ridge (Suth)

Sandy Point Flats (Suth)

Silver Beach Kurnell

Wanda Sand Dunes

Woolooware Bay

## **Other sites that were maintained as part of the ongoing maintenance roster in 2008-09:**

### **NATIONAL PARK AREA**

Beauty Point

Georges River National Park

Towra Bird Sanctuary

Towra Beach

Kurnell Forest

Kurnell peninsular

### **NON MEMBER COUNCILS**

#### **Canterbury**

Cooks River

Sugar Mill area

#### **Marrickville**

Kendrick Park

Tempe Reserve

## **Riverkeeper Corporate Days**

### **Bain International Pty Ltd**

In December 2008, Bain International participated in their second annual corporate day with the GRCCC Riverkeeper Program. Forty people travelled by boat to Towra Point in the Sutherland Shire, planted thousands of indigenous plants and collected a significant amount of rubbish. After a hard day's work, the group relaxed with a BBQ lunch on the beach. The GRCCC would like to thank Bain International for their continued support of the Riverkeeper Program and their tremendous efforts.



**Above:** Bain International employees onsite at Towra Point





## Telstra Corporation Ltd

*World Environment Day – 5 June 2009*

The GRCCC Riverkeeper Program hosted a Telstra Tree Planting event for staff on World Environment Day on 5 June 2009. The event was held at the Georges River National Park at Revesby. Approximately 50 Telstra employees, together with representatives from several GRCCC member councils and the NPWS worked together to plant over 4,000 trees on the day. A further 6,000 trees which were ordered by Telstra for the day are being progressively planted by Riverkeeper teams. Telstra provided a BBQ lunch for all participants and a great day was had by all. Special thanks to Leonie Gray from Fairfield City Council, Andrew Hewson from Campbelltown City Council, Joel Daniels from Liverpool City Council and Beth Noel of Sutherland Shire Council who gave their time to assist on the day.



**Above:** NPWS and Telstra employees at work on World Environment Day



## GEORGES RIVER ESTUARY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The GRCCC was successful in securing a further \$40,000 from the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) during 2008-09 to continue the development of an Estuary Management Plan for the Georges River.

The Estuary Management Committee (or cluster group) includes Councillor and or technical officer representation from Hurstville, Kogarah, Rockdale, Liverpool, Sutherland and Bankstown Councils; the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority (SMCMA); National Parks and Wildlife Service; NSW Maritime; Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries; and the Department of Lands. The group oversaw the development of a consultants brief for a joint Data Compilation and Estuary Processes Study. Five Tenders were received and SMEC Australia Pty Ltd was engaged to commence the joint Study. The draft study will be submitted to the Estuary Management Committee in December 2009 for review.



**Above:** meeting of the Estuary Management Committee

The Georges River Estuary Management Plan study area extends for the Liverpool Weir to Botany Bay, with Towra Point to the south and the Cooks River to the north forming the eastern boundary. This comprises the tidal waterways, bays, foreshores and adjacent lands of the Georges River and its major tributaries. Consideration will also be given to the wider catchment areas as they may affect the issues to be addressed, e.g. water quality.



**Above:** Georges River Estuary

GRCCC member councils benefit in many ways by being involved in the development of an Estuary Management Plan (EMP) for the Georges River. All actions within an adopted EMP are eligible for grant funding up to 50% of the total cost through the NSW Government's Estuary Management Program. Actions within a Plan receive top priority as opposed to councils applying for grants who have no EMP.



The scope of what can be funded under the program is quite broad and covers all projects likely to have a positive result for estuaries such as:

- Gross pollutant traps, water quality and stormwater management.
- Bush regeneration in estuarine foreshore and riparian vegetation.
- Riparian, creek and foreshore rehabilitation and protection including erosion control.
- Wetland rehabilitation, protection, management.
- Foreshore improvement works and related infrastructure to restore vegetation, habitats, improvements to amenity and access to the foreshore e.g. viewing platforms, boardwalks.
- Estuarine monitoring programs e.g. water quality monitoring.
- Estuary management plans and related estuarine technical studies.
- Pre-construction activities for works projects which are eligible for subsidy and likely to proceed to construction e.g. designs and environmental impact assessment.
- Estuarine educational programs, including interpretive signage, brochures etc.

DECC provides specialist technical support to councils to prepare and implement actions within an EMP. This extends to helping councils design suitable on-ground projects and the provision of data and information.

Estuary Management Plans provide councils with the means to:

- Improve the environmental health and condition of estuaries.
- Protect important coastal habitats, features and heritage items.
- Rehabilitate degraded areas.
- Improve public access and amenity.
- Accommodate sustainable population growth and resource utilisation.
- Obtain funding to carry out works - not just DECC but also SMCMA and other funding bodies.
- Prioritise what needs to be done to better manage the estuary.
- Gain community support and acceptance of how the estuary should be managed.
- Gain cooperation between other councils, government agencies and stakeholders.





## RIVERHEALTH MONITORING PROGRAM

GRCCC's Riverhealth Monitoring Program is the first of its kind in Sydney to assess the health of a river on a regional scale. The program which was developed by the GRCCC in association with the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority, will provide meaningful data to aid the management of the river by identifying priority areas for future conservation works. Sydney Water's Streamwatch Program is also partnering with the GRCCC to collect data and monitor sites as part of the program.

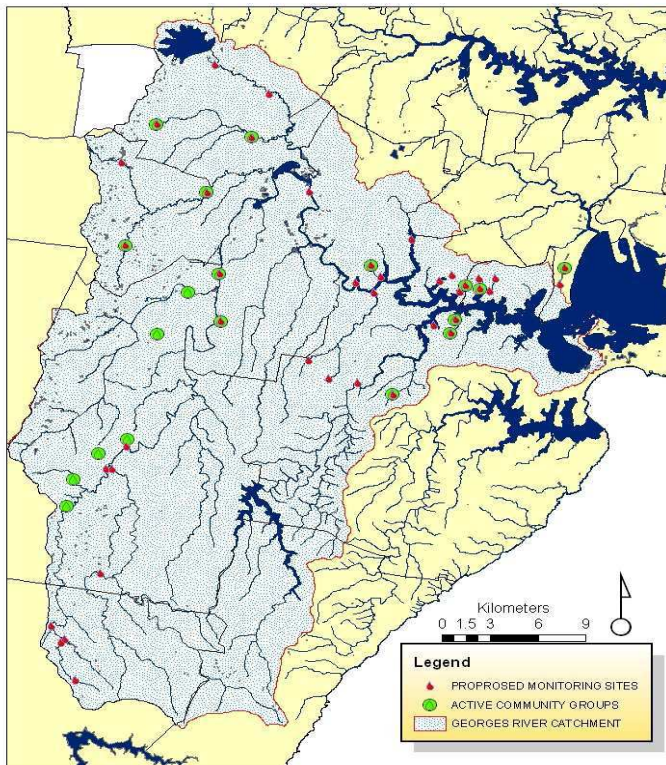


**Australian Government**

The GRCCC was successful in achieving a \$210,000 Federal Government Caring for our Country grant and to run the Riverhealth Monitoring Program for two years until June 2011.

Volunteers will help monitor water quality, biodiversity and mangrove vegetation in 39 creeks between Wollondilly and Rockdale. Councils, community organisations, school groups and Bushcare and Streamwatch members will be involved in the sampling efforts which will occur twice a year in Autumn and Spring.

Carl Tippler was employed as the GRCCC Riverhealth Co-ordinator and he will work with councils and other stakeholders to implement the project. We look forward to bringing you details of the program and its achievements in the next annual report.



**GRCCC COMMUNITY RIVERHEALTH PROGRAM  
MONITORING SITES**



## **FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM**

Following the endorsement of the GRCCC's *Strategic Futures and Management & Implementation Plan*, the GRCCC requested that the Finance and Administration Program Cluster be formed to undertake a review of the longer term options for funding and hosting the GRCCC.

The GRCCC Executive Group identified three options for hosting the GRCCC to be explored by the Finance & Administration cluster. The options were:

- A permanent hosting arrangement within a member Council, as is the arrangement with the Southern Councils Group who operate permanently from Kiama Council;
- A four-year hosting period; and
- All or part of the business administration of the GRCCC being undertaken independently by the GRCCC out of the Revesby Riverkeeper Office.

The Executive worked with the Finance & Administration cluster to develop a proposal that recommended the hosting of the GRCCC be aligned with the local government council term. This recommendation was endorsed by the GRCCC at its meeting on October 2008. Following this recommendation Hurstville City Council agreed to host the GRCCC until the end of the current council term (September 2012) following the conclusion of Liverpool City Council's hosting period which on 30 June 2009.

The Finance & Administration Cluster was reformed in May 2009 following a request from Kogarah City Council for the GRCCC to review its fee structure. The cluster included managers from Liverpool, Rockdale, Hurstville, Fairfield, Bankstown, Kogarah and Campbelltown City Councils and Sutherland Shire Council. The fee review group made the following recommendations which were endorsed by the GRCCC at its meeting on 25 June 2009:

- The development of an annual workplan for the Riverkeeper program which is developed in consultation with Councils in accordance with their projects.
- Renaming the Riverkeeper program fee to "GRCCC Program Fee" in recognition of the other programs we now manage as per the GRCCC Management & Implementation Plan.
- A flat program fee for all member Councils.
- Investigating a fee for service for other Councils using the Riverkeeper service, i.e. Marrickville and Canterbury.
- Consider scaling back works in areas where Councils do not financially contribute to the Riverkeeper Program.
- The Riverkeeper be required to give a formal presentation at every second GRCCC meeting on the delivery of the annual work plan. It must be a structured report and focused on results in each LGA.



## RIVER ECOSYSTEMS PROGRAM

The River Ecosystems Program was identified during the strategic planning process to support and complement the objectives of the Mid Georges River Urban Sustainability Initiative. However the aims and objectives of the program are also applicable to the Upper and Lower Sustainability Initiatives and are therefore applicable to the whole catchment.



**Above:** meeting of the River Ecosystems Program group

The River Ecosystem Program involves the GRCCC leading an alliance of Councils to improve urban water management with particular focus on stormwater and urban runoff to achieve sustainable water quality and conservation outcomes. The program also aims to improve and protect urban bushland and creeks, urban wildlife and habitats of rare and endangered flora and fauna. Finally, the program aims to improve the sustainability performance of local Councils, small businesses, community organisations and householders in urban areas.

The program cluster group was established in December 2008 and consists of storm water engineers, strategic planners and other technical officers from our nine member councils as well as representatives from the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority.

The cluster group developed a scoping brief for the program which includes the following key components:

**The Program Vision** states “the Georges River is a diverse and sustainable ecosystem achieved through the engagement of all stakeholders”.

**The Program Objectives** agreed to by the Program cluster group are:

1. Develop a consistent and co-ordinated approach to Stormwater and Urban Water Management throughout the Georges River Catchment.
2. Increase the level of community pride, awareness, consultation and engagement in relation to the Georges River and its tributaries.
3. Improve the health and ecological function of riparian areas, wetlands and aquatic ecosystems within the Georges River Catchment.
4. Increase the level of communication, co-ordination and consistency in planning between Councils within the Georges River Catchment and Government NRM Agencies.





## How will the River Ecosystem program objectives be met?

The program will achieve its objectives harnessing the shared knowledge amongst the program cluster group. Networks of this kind provide access to many experts and specialists across the catchment which will further reduce costs and the duplication of council resources as they will be shared.

1. Council officers have provided details of their council's five top current projects, action items and timeframes for implementation that fit with the program objectives above. At each meeting these items will be updated and thereby councils are able to demonstrate how they are meeting the objectives of the program.
2. Councils have been asked to provide a retrospective list of actions they have already undertaken in the last financial year which address the program objectives. This information will be used to compile the first of a series of "report cards" to showcase the NRM achievements of member Councils across the catchment.
3. The River Ecosystems Program will be strategic in its efforts to facilitate greater consistency in planning for stormwater and urban water management. This is being demonstrated through the first in a series of professionally facilitated workshops being conducted in February to discuss the formation of a catchment wide agreement to achieve a consistent approach to urban water management across the catchment. Resources will also be identified to enhance Councils' capacity to minimise the impact of urbanisation on the Georges River. These may include training for water sensitive urban design measures and workshops on best practice foreshore planning for strategic planners, water policy staff and councillors.
4. The Riverkeeper Program will assist the River Ecosystems Program with on-ground works to improve the health of riparian vegetation. The River Ecosystems Program should also work with Councils to establish new bushcare groups and strengthen existing groups to achieve this objective. This will be promoted on the new Georges River Website and through MGRSI / UGRSI education / communication materials.
5. The River Ecosystems program will utilise the new GRCCC Georges River website at [www.georgesriver.org.au](http://www.georgesriver.org.au) to increase community awareness on sustainable practices. The program will be promoted through with website and increased community participation and involvement in relevant council events will also be sought in this way.
6. Annual stakeholder forums for Councils and agencies are proposed. Community days such as a proposed annual Georges River Festival to build community support for the program. These activities also complement the GRCCC Education and Communication Program.



Following the development of the Scoping Brief the Group decided to focus on the first objective: the development of a consistent and co-ordinated approach to stormwater and urban water management throughout the catchment. After meeting in February and May 2009, the group agreed on the following next steps towards achieving this aim:

1. Review and agree on proposed water quality targets.  
Review and agree on the wording for a draft LEP clause.  
Review and comment on proposed flow targets and whether they are achievable.
2. Employ a consistent policy that is adopted over time as each council reviews its DCP. This would involve the following:
  - As councils DCP's are reviewed include agreed water quality and flow targets.
  - Incorporate the draft LEP clause
3. Future workshops being conducted as part of the BBCCI to build the basis for a water quality improvement plan which will look at what's already been done and plans going forward.
4. Catchment Tours - GRCCC Councillors and Senior Council Management (Director Planning, Director Engineering & GM). River tour to degraded section of river. Tour will then move back on shore and get on a bus to look at what can be done (WSUD sites) to stop inputs.
5. General Councillor information tour. What does sustainable urban water management / WSUD adoption mean for your council? What are the causes of reduced water quality (how has it happened), what can be done, how much will it cost, why does it have to happen on a regional scale?
6. Schedule Councillor and staff training sessions on integrated water management / WSUD within councils.

The GRCCC will work with the LGRSI in 2009-10 to raise awareness of the need for sustainable and consistent urban water management in the catchment by participating in the LGRSI co-ordinated Water Sensitive Urban Design capacity building sessions.



## GRCCC EDUCATION AND MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

Following the very successful Education and Media and Communications Program Cluster's Website Development meeting held at Liverpool City Council in June 2008, the cluster group developed a consultant's brief for the design and build of the new Georges River Website. The brief included the following objectives for the site:



[www.georgesriver.org.au](http://www.georgesriver.org.au)

- The new Georges River Website should provide a “one-stop-shop” for information on the Georges River.
- The site should showcase the achievements and outputs of the GRCCC and Upper, Middle and Lower Georges River Sustainability Initiatives which collectively represent \$6 million worth of State Government Investment.
- The website would be a key interpretive tool to disseminate information and provide linkages between local, state and federal government agencies and the wider community.

Some key features of the website include:

- Information on the river for the community and stakeholders.
- Links to Georges River catchment local government councils and other government websites such as the CMA, DECC and community stakeholders' websites.
- Spatial representation of the river via an interactive map of the catchment. The map will highlight sites where program work is being undertaken and these hotspots will link back to an information page on each project site,
- Easy access to downloadable documents, public reports, plans, publications and research information on the river.
- The promotion of the river's environmental and recreational value.
- The promotion of projects and programs associated with the river.
- An educational resource for schools and students,
- An events calendar for community engagement.

The brief was issued in July 2008 and following a review of the tenders received and presentations from several website development companies BlueArc was eventually engaged to develop the site.

The cluster group worked with BlueArc over the next six months to oversee the development of the key features, design, interactive capacity of the site. The GRCCC also collected specific information and resources from each member council in the catchment to be included on the site as well as links to council and stakeholder sites.

By the end of the 2008-09 financial year the site was in the testing phase. More information on the site and its launch will be provided in the Annual Report for 2009-10.



## GRCCC Community Engagement Officer

The Lower Georges River Urban Sustainability Initiative includes funding for a Community Engagement officer for the GRCCC. This officer will also work part-time on the LGRSI initiative and accordingly the GRCCC worked with the project manager of the LGRSI to develop a position description. The role will perform the following duties for the GRCCC:

- Provide support to the GRCCC (Executive Officer) in the development and implementation of its Community Engagement, Education and Communication strategy as outlined in the GRCCC's Management and Implementation Plan.
- The position will also help to co-ordinate the Community Engagement activities of the Lower, Mid and Upper Georges River Urban Sustainability Initiatives with which the GRCCC is partnered.
- Co-ordinating the community / stakeholder engagement and publicity components of the GRCCC's other programs in consultation with member councils and stakeholders. This will include but not be limited to:
  - Urban Sustainability Programs
  - River Ecosystem Program
  - Riverkeeper Program
  - River Health Monitoring Project
  - Estuary Management Program
- Leading the GRCCC Education / Communications Program Cluster Group and the GRCCC Stakeholder Engagement Program Cluster Group as described in the GRCCC M&I Plan.
- Building networks and partnerships with community groups in identified target areas and conducting appropriate events for engaging with community groups and member councils within the region.
- Maintaining and updating the content of the GRCCC Georges River Website.
- Preparing promotional, communication and educational material for the community and stakeholders of the Georges River Catchment.





# MID GEORGES RIVER SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

Bankstown and Sutherland Councils, along with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the GRCCC successfully secured three years of funding from the NSW Environmental Trust to improve the management of the mid Georges River. The Mid Georges River Sustainability Initiative (MGRSI) aims to create a healthy, balanced ecosystem and a shared vision for the Georges River by the community, stakeholders and all levels of government.



Mid Georges River  
Sustainability Initiative

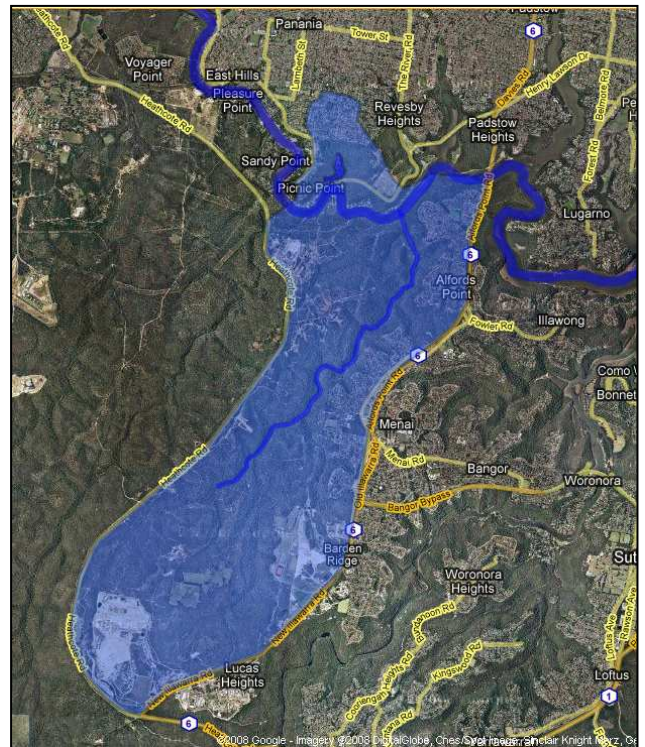
During the 2008-09 financial year the GRCCC continued to Chair the Project Steering Committee of the Mid Georges River Sustainability Initiative and play an active role in the initiative.

Masterplans have been developed for two sub-catchments of the mid Georges River region: Yeramba Lagoon in the suburb of Picnic Point and Mill Creek in the west Menai area. The masterplans identify opportunities to improve the overall health and management of the catchments. Extensive consultation with the community and other stakeholders was a key part of the development of these masterplans. Implementation of the masterplans is currently commencing in both catchments with significant amounts of on-ground works planned for 2010.



Above: Yeramba Lagoon Consultation

Education strategies have also been completed for Mill Creek and Yeramba Lagoon catchments. These will focus on raising awareness within the community and stakeholders of the importance of these areas and engaging the local community with the sites. Encouraging a stewardship type role, particularly in Yeramba Lagoon will be a focus. A casual officer will be employed in early January to commence the implementation of the strategies. The MGRSI has also been linking in with the GRCCC in their RiverHealth program to encourage greater awareness amongst the community of the impacts that the urban environment has on our waterways.



Above: Mid Georges River Project Area

The MGRSI has worked closely with the GRCCC and the Upper Georges River Sustainability Initiative to develop the Georges River website which was successfully launched during Water Week.



Through involvement in the River Ecosystems Cluster, the MGRSI has been able to promote and facilitate a greater knowledge and awareness of water sensitive urban design (WSUD) and improved urban water governance in member Councils. The MGRSI is also linking in with the Lower Georges River Sustainability Initiative to develop WSUD action plans for both Sutherland and Bankstown Councils that will assist them in moving towards the next step along the path towards a Water Sensitive City.



**Above:** Mill Creek Consultation



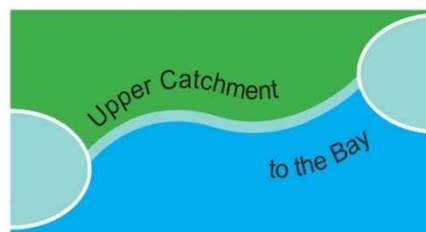
**Above:** Yeramba Bird Walk





# UPPER GEORGES RIVER URBAN SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

In May 2006 the GRCCC facilitated a 'Think Tank' meeting with councils in the Upper Georges River catchment with a view to developing a strategic approach for the management of the Upper Georges River (UGR). The GRCCC, through member Councils, subsequently sought funding from the NSW Environmental Trust. Campbelltown and Liverpool City Councils in association with Wollondilly Shire Council and the Georges River Combined Councils' Committee secured funding for three years (2007 – 2010) for the preparation and implementation of a Strategic Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) for the Upper Georges River Catchment.



In essence, the project is about partnerships and bringing together the key stakeholders responsible for managing the river and then working co-operatively to preserve the upper catchment. The GRCCC is a member of the UGR Project Steering Committee and is involved in facilitating the dissemination of information and learning that is produced by the project.

## ACTIVITIES IN 2008/2009

### 1. Vision workshop

A Vision Workshop was held on 14 April 2009 which developed the following statement as the agreed vision:

**“CARING FOR YOUR LIVING RIVER NOW!”**

### 2. Strategic Directions

Prior to the Vision workshop, stakeholder workshops during 2008 had established the following six agreed strategic directions. These directions for the UGR are as follows:

- i. The river corridor is protected, reinforced and re-established through appropriate planning, education and weed removal.
- ii. Promote stewardship of creeks and adjacent lands through education, planning and incentives such as on ground works.
- iii. Improve infrastructure to ensure water quality improvements.
- iv. Minimise mining impacts on the UGR.
- v. Manage access by preventing 4 wheel drive access, encouraging use such as cycling and walking in appropriate locations and excluding use in other location.
- vi. Improve water quality for a range of activities.



**Above:** 2008 Strategic Workshop



### 3. Caring for Our Country Grant Application

Campbelltown City Council submitted an application to the Australian Government to secure funds for Bow Bowing Bunbury Curran Creek (BBBCC) Renaturalisation and Habitat Protection as a partnership between the City Works and Planning and Environment Divisions. As some 90% of Campbelltown's urban water discharges from the BBBCC catchment, this is an important project for improving water quality in the Georges River downstream. The Caring for Our Country Grants were hotly contested and unfortunately Council was unsuccessful in securing funding, however the proposal remains an important project for future consideration.



Above: Bow Bowing Bunbury Curran Creek in Flood

### 4. The Strategic Environmental Management Plan

The draft SEMP for the UGR has been circulated to Project Steering Committee members, state agencies and other stakeholders for their comment. The comments received will be incorporated into the next version of the document.

### 5. Update on funding allocations and process

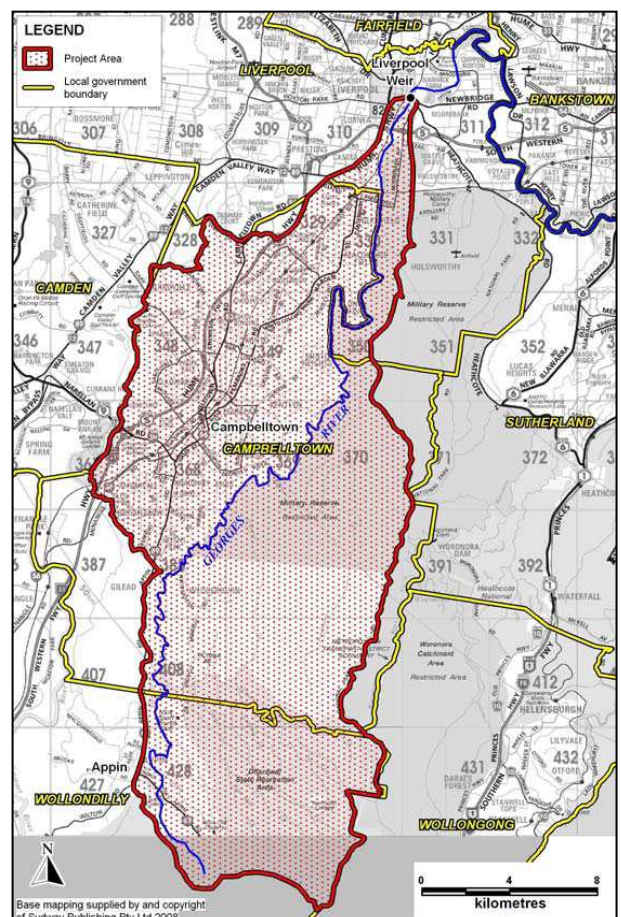
Nearly \$1.1 million dollars has been allocated for works on ground at each of the three partner Councils. The diverse range of projects to be funded as part of the UGR project demonstrates the diversity of actions that can be taken to improve sustainability.

### 6. Development of the Plan of Management for Marsden Park

Marsden Park is a popular recreation location for people from Campbelltown and other areas. The preparation of the updated Plan of Management for Marsden Park Wetland was funded by the Catchment Management Authority and included an on site visitor survey.

### 7. Sustainability debate 26 June 2009

The Sustainability Debate and Breakfast with Radio ABC's Adam Spencer and the Sustainability Symposium took place on 26 June. Many attended to support the UGR, taking time out of their busy schedules. The Sustainability Symposium was a great way to promote the UGR and the high calibre of speakers on the day demonstrated what can be achieved in the Macarthur Region.



Above: UGRSI Project Area shown in Red



Hosted by Mrs Debbie Roberts (CEO from Youth Solutions), speakers included Dr Garry Smith; Mr Andre Taylor; Professor Bobby Bannerjee; Mr Ed Warcaba and Mr Bill Parker from Symmetry, the partner organisation for this event.

## HOW ARE WE MEETING THE UPPER GEORGES RIVER PROJECT OBJECTIVES?

The project includes an approved Business Plan that has seven objectives. The project has responded in a number of ways to meet these objectives. The table below describes the objectives and project response.

Objective	How has the project responded?
1. <b><i>Provide a common vision for the UGR Catchment</i></b>	Through a process of extensive consultation the project has identified six strategic directions of importance to UGR stakeholders. An agreed 'Vision' has been achieved which is currently being incorporated into the SEMP.
2. <b><i>Promote a coordinated approach to the management of the UGR Catchment</i></b>	In consultation with UGR stakeholders, the SEMP including management actions is being developed. Discussions involve the three Councils, the GRCCC, state agencies and community, education and business groups.
3. <b><i>Promote a sense of community ownership</i></b>	The community is involved in the Project Steering Committee, through workshops, at Riverfest and on ground works and activities at sites such as Simmos in Macquarie Fields, UWS and Campbelltown Art Centre partnerships.
4. <b><i>Improve the health of the UGR and associated urban waterways</i></b>	Health of the UGR will be improved through the development of on ground works and applications for additional funding e.g. Caring for Our Country Grant proposal for works to improve the health of the catchment.
5. <b><i>Increase the capacity of Councils to monitor progress towards sustainability &amp; undertake projects to achieve a sustainable environment</i></b>	The draft SEMP includes monitoring and evaluation of activities. Projects will involve Council staff across divisions to assist in skills development for all council staff.
6. <b><i>Develop synergies with other projects and value add to existing projects to promote improved catchment management</i></b>	Engage with other activities and involvement in mainstream Council activities such as Streamcare, Bushcare, the GRCCC, the Environmental Funds and Stormwater Levy activities, education programs, business and University of Western Sydney.
7. <b><i>Undertake on ground works and implement new environmental initiatives</i></b>	Schedule of on ground works agreed to and planned for 2009/10 financial year.





# LOWER GEORGES RIVER URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

## BACKGROUND

The detrimental environmental impacts of urbanisation on the catchment and waterways of the Lower Georges River have been noted in a range of recent studies. The various strategies and plans that have been developed to address these environmental impacts commonly identify pollution by stormwater run-off as the primary threat to ecosystem health and recreational use and loss of native vegetation as a threat to biodiversity. Issues particular to the Lower Georges River include high sedimentation rates, loss of aquatic habitat, decreased biodiversity, and protection of recreational values.

Additionally, it has been recognised that governance issues related to institutional arrangements reflecting the numerous and often conflicting priorities within local governments, and the extent of community participation in governance are critical barriers to environmental protection and restoration in particular, and progress towards sustainability more generally (UTS, 2009).

The Lower Georges River Sustainability initiative (LGRSI) is a response to long-standing Georges River Combined Councils' Committee (GRCCC) objectives for its River Ecosystems Program. The LGRSI may be seen, along with the Urban Sustainability Program (USP) projects in the Mid and Upper Georges River, as part of a catchment-wide approach to planning and action.

Together, these three USP initiatives provide important elements of the River Ecosystems Program described in the GRCCC's Management and Implementation Plan (Evans and Peck, 2008). Notably, the LGRSI, by virtue of its timing as the third of three projects which together cover the whole Georges River catchment, provides an opportunity for integrative whole-of-catchment approaches under the umbrella of the GRCCC's Management and Implementation Plan.

Additionally, there are currently projects underway which overlap with the geographical and social communities of interest with which the LGRSI must interact and cooperate. Important current plans and projects include:

- The Lower Georges River Stormwater Management Plan (1999);
- Community Strategic Plans required of Councils in accord with the Draft Integrated Planning Act;
- Environmental Management Plans and Plans of Management of the four proponent Councils (Rockdale, Kogarah, Hurstville and Sutherland);
- The Georges River Estuary Management Plan managed by the GRCCC;
- Urban Sustainability Initiatives in the Mid and Upper Georges River which are elements in the GRCCC's River Ecosystems program;
- The Cooks River Sustainability Initiative;
- The RiverHealth Water Quality Monitoring program (GRCCC) and Tide to Table – Botany Bay estuarine water quality monitoring (Ocean Watch Australia Ltd);
- The GRCCC Georges Riverkeeper Program and the GRCCC River Ecosystems Program;



- The GRCCC website;
- The SMCMA Wetlands and Waterways Program;
- The Botany Bay Coastal Catchments Initiative being managed by SMCMA; and
- The SMCMA's Botany Bay Water Quality Improvement Program (recently funded through the competitive round of the Australian Government Caring for our Country Program).

## STRATEGY

The Steering Committee has confirmed an aspiration for the LGRSI to be practical and focused on 'results'. There is an appreciation that the long term aspirations of the project for water quality, biodiversity, governance and community sustainability are not likely to be fully met within the project timeframe. Consequently, the project should be catalytic and take the 'next steps' towards those objectives by putting in place practical arrangements which can underpin sustained and transformative change.

In response, the Strategic Sustainability Plan identified in the project application will have several discrete but interdependent Action Plans, each aimed at realising objectives identified as the "next steps" towards achieving the desired outcomes of the Project. The Action Plans will be further developed and finalised by March 2010.

## DESIRED OUTCOME

The Intermediate Outcomes of the LGRSI, which identify the impact that will be observable from meeting the LGRSI project objectives in terms of changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, awareness, practices and behaviours, are:

1. More effective institutional arrangements within partner councils (to enable and enhance sustainable practices).
2. More effective urban water management.
3. More integrated planning and implementation of NRM programs within the LGR catchment.
4. More sustainable practices (ie behaviour) of community and business.
5. Improved bushland, biodiversity and riparian health.

## ACTION PLANS

The four Action Plans to be developed are:

***NRM Integration Program*** activities focus on the governance issues relating to the overlapping roles of numerous organisations within the catchment, and aim to enhance the integration of these activities and the coordination of related activities and media messages.



**Organisational Effectiveness Program** activities have both environmental and economic implications. The environmental issues relate to improved waste minimisation and management practices, more sustainable purchasing practices and Council involvement in each of the other Action Plans. The economic issues relate to prioritising the allocation of resources, and influence on Council purchasing decisions.

**The WSUD Adoption Program** has both governance and on-ground implications for Councils. The governance issues relate to both the manner in which Council staff, departments and Councillors organise and interact for information exchange and planning, and the mechanisms of government (such as DCPs) which regulate the application of water management principles in urban development and construction.

On-ground environmental issues will be addressed through provision of WQIDs and constructed examples of best practice in WSUD. These will be prioritised and funded in accord with the decision-making processes determined in the Action Plan.

**The Community Partnerships Program** has economic, governance, environmental and social implications. The Program has a focus on capacity building for partnerships which involves novel approaches to governance of projects. In particular, the requirement for a partnership and the support for projects based on a partnership between stakeholders provide a different approach to competition for resources.

On-ground environmental issues will be addressed through on-going support for projects which emerge from a supported planning process. These will be prioritised and funded in accord with the decision-making processes determined in the Action Plan.

Economic issues will be addressed to the extent that they are identified in successful partnership projects. Business groups, along with other community groups, are likely to integrate economic considerations into their conception of the sustainability projects they propose.

Interaction between council and community groups, and between the community groups, in workshopping the partnership proposals will enhance the social networking of existing people and groups and awareness amongst participants of the range and significance of issues with a sustainability focus.

The bushland, biodiversity and riparian health activities have on-ground environmental and social implications. Better social relationships can be expected from increased interaction between Councils and community groups. Improved environmental outcomes can be expected from increased support for projects with a vegetation and biodiversity focus.

Notably, the Community Partnerships Program deliberately avoids restricting the definition of “sustainability”, and it is from this program that novel approaches may emerge. While a compendium of sustainability projects from many areas will be provided to participants as a resource, it is expected that projects which emerge will reflect the particular history and circumstances of the people and landscape of the Lower Georges River.





The intention is for the partnership projects to provide leadership by example towards ongoing, beneficial influence of householders, businesses and visitors in the direction of sustainability.

#### FOUNDATIONAL ACTIVITIES TO DATE

The LGRSI was approved for commencement by the NSW Environmental Trust and the project partners on 20 January 2009. The Project Manager commenced work on 20 May 2009.

The project is on track to have the Business Plan reviewed and approved in October 2009. Activities to date include:

- Steering Committee formed, Terms of Reference agreed, and Expressions of Interest for Community Member positions under consideration
- Draft Business Plan submitted for review by Environmental Trust, including:
  - Outcomes Hierarchy reflecting review by Steering Committee of project objectives
  - Engagement and Communications Strategies (Draft)
  - Budget
- Engagement and Communications Officer position advertised
- WSUD Action Plan workshops scheduled (30 Nov and 1-4 Dec)
- Community Partnerships Program Action Plan (Draft)

#### ANTICIPATED ACTIVITIES

Anticipated activities up to the completion of the Strategic Sustainability Plan in March 2010 include:

Appointment and induction of the Engagement and Communications Officer, and development of a workplan to provide for operationalising the LGRSI Engagement and Communications Strategy and completion of activities identified in the GRCCC Communications Plan (particularly re the website).

- Completion of the Strategic Sustainability Plan including:
  - Situation Analysis and review
  - Completion of four Action Plans
- Commencement of work within the Community Partnerships Program Action Plan:
  - Development of compendium of sustainability activities from elsewhere
  - Engagement of existing community groups
  - Expressions of interest for projects/programs
  - Project planning workshops leading to project plans
- Commencement of work within the WSUD Action Plan:
  - Group workshop for 4 councils
  - Planning workshop for each of 4 councils
  - Identification of next steps and resource needs for each council



- Commencement of work within the Organisational Effectiveness Action Plan:
  - Organisational Profiling (per Monash Uni model) in 4 councils
  - Identification of next steps and resource needs for each council
- Commencement of work within the NRM Integration Action Plan:
  - Mapping of current project/program overlap and integration
  - Identification of next steps and resource needs for each organisation

## SCHEDULED MILESTONES

Milestone	Outcomes	Project measure	Completion Date
Completion/approval of business plan	Project Steering Committee	Committee exists	April 2009
	Agreed Steering Committee Terms of Reference	Terms of Reference adopted	August 2009
	Project Manager engaged		
	Business Plan approved	Project Manager employment	June 2009
	Engagement and Communications Officer engaged	Business Plan with sign-off by Environmental trust and partner councils	October 2009
		Engagement and Communications Officer	November 2009
Completion of Strategic Sustainability Plan	Strategic Sustainability Plan approved	Strategic Sustainability Plan (with 4 Action Plans) with sign-off by Environmental Trust and partner councils	March 2010
Progress report approved	Progress report approved	Progress report	March 2010
Revision of business plan for year 2	Revised business plan completed and submitted	Revised Business Plan with sign-off by Environmental trust and partner councils	April 2010
Implementation of SSP Action Plans	Action Plans to guide activities.	Action Plans adopted by project partners.	March 2011
	Action Plan – NRM Integration	Agreements	
	Action Plan - WSUD adoption	WSUD adoption strategies.	
	Action Plan - Community Partnerships	Community-proponent partnerships.	



	Action Plan – Organisational Effectiveness	Community and business sustainability projects implemented.  Bushland, Biodiversity and Riparian health projects implemented. Organisational Profiles.	
Submission of progress report		Progress report submitted and approved	March 2011



# GRCCC FINANCIAL STATEMENT

<b>GEORGES RIVER COMBINED COUNCILS COMMITTEE</b> <b>C/- 1 Hoxton Park Road, Liverpool NSW 2170</b> <b>STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE</b> <b>YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE, 2009</b>		
	<b>2008/2009</b>	<b>2007/2008</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>INCOME</b>		
GRCCC Membership Fees & Riverkeeper Contributions (GST exclusive)	248,437	200,022
Grants & Contributions	221,816	83,610
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>470,253</b>	<b>283,632</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Salaries & Allowances (Incl. On Costs)	110,103	75,670
Materials and Equipment	11,250	14,256
Contracts, Consulting and Training	22,039	63,657
Registration / CTP Insurance	488	1,116
Telephones	1,209	1,178
Advertising	116	-
Office Expenses	368	735
Printing	-	311
Insurance Premiums	12,749	8,659
Travel	24	274
Waterways Contribution	85,703	82,004
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>244,049</b>	<b>247,860</b>
<b>OPERATING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>226,204</b>	<b>35,772</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION</b>		
Cash Balance B/Fwd	154,786	119,014
Add: Receipts from 1/7/08 to 30/6/09	470,253	283,632
Less: Expenditures from 1/7/08 to 30/06/09	244,049	247,860
Cash Balance at 30/06/09	<b>380,990</b>	<b>154,786</b>

