Georges Riverkeeper

ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

GEORGES RIVERKEEPER EXECUTIVE GROUP'S REPORT

Councillor
Geoffrey Shelton
Georges Riverkeeper
Chairperson

Councillor
Peter Scaysbrook
Georges Riverkeeper
Vice Chairperson

Councillor
Adrian Wong
Georges Riverkeeper
Treasurer

Beth Salt
Georges Riverkeeper
Program Manager
1July 2019 to November 2019

Peter Ryan
Georges Riverkeeper
Program Manager
March 2020 to June 2020

Fiona Stock
Georges River Council,
Host Manager
1July 2019 to Jan 2020

Andrew Spooner
Georges River Council,
Host Manager
Jan 2020 to June 2020

GEORGES RIVER CATCHMENT

The Georges Riverkeeper Executive Group includes our Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Treasurer, supported by a Program Manager, and Host Manager from Georges River Council. The Executive Group Officer Bearers are members of our Committee elected by member Council Councillors. Meeting monthly, the Executive Group is responsible for the management and functioning of the Georges Riverkeeper, reviewing its financial management, operations and Programs, and keeping member Councils informed so that key decisions can be made at General Committee Meetings.

Georges Riverkeeper implemented its Strategic Plan 2018-2022 via implementation of activities in the 2019-20 Work Plan. Georges Riverkeeper adopted a Media and Communications Policy and Procedure; signed a Licence of Occupation for NPWS Riverkeeper Centre; and pursued appointment of an Aboriginal Cultural Custodian to be a custodian for the Georges Riverkeeper and its Programs.

The Executive Group would like to thank our member Councils, Council staff, Committee, partners, stakeholders and community representatives for their support and contributions throughout the year.

40TH ANNIVERSARY

Georges Riverkeeper, one of one of Australia's longest running catchment management organisations, celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2019 with a River Tour for member Council Councillors and key staff, Committee members and other partners and supporters. The event helped to share knowledge of the river's features, history and challenges, and see first-hand how beautiful the river can be.

From humble beginnings in 1979 as the Georges River Combined Councils' Committee (GRCCC) run by a group of volunteers, the organisation has evolved, and today not only removes litter from the Georges River but also works to stop pollution from entering the waterways, restore bushland and protect biodiversity along the river, and undertake water quality monitoring and research - all with the aim of protecting the river and improving liveability for local residents. Good water quality means great recreational, health, environmental and economic benefits for all to enjoy.

Georges Riverkeeper 40th Anniversary River Tour, October 2019.

Read more about us and the history and evolution of Georges Riverkeeper on our website: georgesriver.org.au/establishment

GEORGES RIVERKEEPER PROGRAM MANAGER'S REPORT

Peter Ryan
Georges Riverkeeper Program Manager

Georges Riverkeeper undertook a mid-term review of its 2018-2022 Strategic Plan. The review identified the importance for Georges Riverkeeper to continue to provide support that meets the needs of member Councils.

Following sustained and significant contributions as Environmental Officer/Program Coordinator, Tony Wales left Georges Riverkeeper, and Rob Dixon joined the team.

Some achievements include:

- Georges Riverkeeper's Research Program progressed with staff and student ecological and social research partnerships at several universities.
- On behalf of member Councils, Georges Riverkeeper coordinated the completion of the Georges River Coastal Management Program Scoping Study.
- Georges Riverkeeper managed two NSW Environmental Trust Rehabilitation Grants to rehabilitate bush sites with Campbelltown City Council at Simmos Beach and Sutherland Shire Council at Oyster Creek Gully.
- Georges Riverkeeper partnered with Conservation Volunteers Australia and managed a Fish Habitat Action Grant to plant 9,000 *Sporobolus Virginicus* plants in the Georges River catchment.
- Corrective Services NSW (CS) rubbish collection sites were added, and CS offenders participated in a bush regeneration pilot project in the Fairfield City Council Local Government Area (LGA).
- Georges Riverkeeper helped organise 'Get the Site Right' campaigns in October 2019 and June 2020.
- Georges Riverkeeper helped organise and run Ocean Crusaders' 'Paddle Against Plastic' Event including a community day and five cleaning days which resulted in the removal of over 10 tonnes of rubbish from the Georges River.

I look forward to continuing to implement Programs with our member Councils, Committee, partners and stakeholders to improve the health of the Georges River and catchment.

CATCHMENT ACTIONS PROGRAM
LITTER REMOVAL

LITTER REMOVAL

Georges Riverkeeper's Catchment Actions Program partnership with NSW Department of Justice – Corrective Services removes litter from the catchment before it enters the river. Over 917 tonnes of rubbish have been removed from the catchment since July 2011, with 72 tonnes of rubbish removed during FY 2020. This result is down from FY 2019 due to work suspensions during the bushfire crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

RUBBISH REMOVED FROM THE RIVER SYSTEM 2019/20

RUBBISH BY SUBCATCHMENT 2019/20

COMMUNITY CLEAN UPS

Georges Riverkeeper partnered with Ocean Crusaders to remove litter from the river. Just after significant flooding in mid-February, Ocean Crusaders removed 10.9 tonnes from the river in the mid Estuary. A 'Paddle Against Plastic' community clean up day was also held, with 60 attendees removing 1,000 kg of marine litter from Salt Pan Creek. Georges Riverkeeper also supported a number of community groups and individual efforts to remove litter and help clean up the river.

CATCHMENT ACTIONS PROGRAM
BUSH REGENERATION

Throughout 2019/20 Georges Riverkeeper has helped to implement two bush regeneration projects, Oyster Creek Gully Restoration Project in partnership with Sutherland Council and Simmos Beach Catchment Restoration Project in partnership with Campbelltown City Council. The projects are partly funded through the NSW Environment Trust Restoration and Rehabilitation Program with works continuing until 2021.

REHABILITATION OF OYSTER CREEK GULLY

Contractors have been targeting maturing woody weeds to reduce seed dispersal and encourage native regeneration in this important remnant.

OUTCOMES

- Mature woody weeds treated along 2/3 of the project area
- Treatment of vines and annual weeds
- 500 plants installed in low resilience areas
- Four Bushcare groups assisting contractors
- Community engaged through monthly social media posts, bug and water quality workshop, signage and school planting days.

SIMMOS BEACH RESTORATION

The project site is home to two endangered ecological communities, and threatened plant and animal species. Through weed removal and assisted plantings, the site is transitioning back to a natural state.

OUTCOMES

- Mechanical treatment of woody weeds along 600m of creekline
- Sediment and litter jams removed to rehabilitate water flow
- Over 7,000 plants installed
- Community engaged with the project through monthly social media posts, community planting days, workshops, signage and monthly Bushcare days.

FISH HABITAT REVEGETATION

Georges Riverkeeper and Conservation Volunteers Australia entered into a joint project to help revegetate saltmarsh vegetation on disturbed shorelines of the Georges River. The project funded by the NSW Fisheries Fish Habitat Action Grants Program saw the installation of 9,000 *Sporobolus virginicus* seedlings at six projects sites. As these plants grow they will help contribute to fish habitat and the food web in the estuary.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES BUSH REGENERATION

With funding assistance from Fairfield City Council, Georges Riverkeeper has helped to co-ordinate NSW Department of Justice – Community Services offenders to conduct weekly bush regeneration at six sites within the Fairfield LGA. As part of their meaningful rehabilitation, offenders have removed weeds from a number of important Cumberland Plain remnants and have assisted with planting a riparian corridor.

RIVER HEALTH MONITORING PROGRAM

The River Health Monitoring Program was established in 2009 and aids adaptive management by using scientifically rigorous methods for ongoing monitoring of freshwater tributaries and estuarine sections of the Georges River. Communication of this evidence base to Councils facilitates efficient and effective use of management resources directed towards waterway improvements. River Health data is also used to communicate the relative condition or health of waterways to the general public. For further detail about conditions, see the Georges Riverkeeeper State of the Georges River 2020 Report on our website.

In 2019/20, River Health data was collected in spring and autumn from 34 freshwater sites, and over warmer months at 17 estuarine sites. The AUSMAP (Australian Microplastics Assessment Project) methods were used for biannual assessment of the amounts of microplastic on shorelines at 11 sites across the catchment. For monitoring at higher spatial resolution, visual assessments were done at over 200 sites across the catchment. Interns from Western Sydney University were trained and assisted with some of the River Health monitoring. The volunteer group from Oatley continued to assist with monitoring of their local waterways and National Parks.

STORMWATER PROGRAM

Georges Riverkeeper's Stormwater Program focuses on improving stormwater management towards regulatory and best practice management standards to improve the quality and quantity of stormwater entering the Georges River.

GET THE SITE RIGHT

Get the Site Right is an education and enforcement campaign focusing on keeping sediment from building sites out of stormwater by ensuring proper erosion and sediment controls are in place. Now in its fifth year, the campaign is a joint program between Georges Riverkeeper, Parramatta River Catchment Group, Cooks River Alliance, Sydney Coastal Councils Group, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), NSW Environment Protection Authority, a number of Sydney Councils and Lake Macquarie Council.

	OCT 2019	JUNE 2020	CHANGE
SITES INSPECTED	406	641	↑
SITES COMPLIANT	252 (62%)	470 (73%)	↑
SITES DID NOT COMPLY	154 (38%)	171 (27%)	↓
FINES ISSUED	$76,330	$189,484	↑

COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Under the Coastal Management Act 2016 and State Environmental Planning Policy (Coastal Management) 2018, the Georges River Coastal Management Program (CMP) Scoping Study (Stage 1) has been prepared following consultation with member Councils, stakeholders and community representatives. On behalf of our member Councils, Georges Riverkeeper will seek DPIE funding to enable completion of CMP stages 2 to 5. Stages 2 to 5 will include: determine risks, vulnerabilities and opportunities; identify and evaluate options; prepare, exhibit, finalise, certify and adopt CMP; and implement, monitor, evaluate and report on CMP.

GEORGES RIVERKEEPER FLOODPLAIN SUB-COMMITTEE

The Georges Riverkeeper Floodplain Risk Management Subcommittee is developing a catchment-wide Floodplain Risk Management Study for the Georges River, aiming to reduce the risk to life, property and social amenity from floods in the Georges River catchment, now and into the future. Phase 1 commenced in January 2020 to collate flood modelling, flood risk, floodplain risk management and emergency response data across the catchment, and review for gaps, consistency, adequacy and reliability. The Committee received a grant of $150,000 from DPIE to match their contribution of $75,000.

RESEARCH PROGRAM

The Research Program was established in 2018. It will improve our knowledge on the impacts of urbanisation on complex aquatic ecosystems; determine how best to mitigate the impacts; explore the features that will define a liveable urban river in the future; and guide how to overcome the multifaceted barriers presently acting to hinder progress towards making Georges River a liveable urban river.

Dr. David Reid (right), Georges Riverkeeper, with with Scott Wilson from Macquarie University

Beth Millsteed (left) from University of Newcastle surveying *Sporobolus virginicus*

IN 2019/20, GEORGES RIVERKEEPER:

- Authored a publication in Regional Studies in Marine Science about the rise and fall of oyster cultivation in the Georges River. Two other literature review manuscripts were submitted for publication in Regional Studies in Marine Science.
- Co-supervised three UNSW Honours students working on projects in the Georges River catchment.
- Established a research partnership with the University of Newcastle. Through that partnership, one Honours student completed a project examining the success of replanting *Sporobolus virginicus* in the Georges River catchment. Another Honours student is continuing work to explore the development of biological indicators of the long-term condition of the Georges River estuary.
- Co-authored and presented a paper at the 2019 Stormwater NSW Conference.
- Established a Research Program Group, with representatives from each member Council. Social isolation restrictions led to postponement of conferences in 2020 and hindered progressing field and laboratory work. However, the Research Group continued to develop research questions of interest to Councils, which can be explored as restrictions are eased.

EDUCATION & CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM

The goal of the Education and Capacity Building Program is to develop and disseminate education materials and provide opportunities to foster a shared understanding of issues and solutions facing environmental management of the Georges River waterways.

ACTIVITIES AND HIGHLIGHTS DURING 2019/20:

EDUCATION

Production, distribution and promotion of factsheets on fishing, mosquitos, pollution, pollution prevention, flooding and Water Sensitive Urban Design, plus dissemination of ten 'Water…WOW' free online education modules for Stage 3 primary school students. In collaboration with Georges River Environmental Education Centre (GREEC), ten 'topic starters' to support lesson planning for Education Modules resources were created.

EVENTS

Georges Riverkeeper 40th Anniversary River Tour, and Ocean Crusaders Paddle Against Plastic Event. Also participated in: Edible Country for Wow Festival 2019 at Casula Powerhouse (Curious Works and Liverpool City Council); Lake Gillawarna Excursion for Stage 3 students (City of Canterbury Bankstown); Hurstville Museum school holiday bug detective activities (Georges River Council); school holiday bug monitoring (Fairfield City Council); River Run stall (Georges River Council), Sutherland Shire Bushcare Fair (Sutherland Shire Council); Heritage Bus Tour (Georges River Council); and community planting days at Simmos Beach (Campbelltown City Council).

COMMUNICATIONS

A new website www.georgesriver.org.au was launched, highlighting how to enjoy the river, help the river and learn about the river, and regular newsletters were issued for Councillors and key stakeholders. Newsletter sign up is also available for the community via the website. Georges Riverkeeper activities, including grant projects, were promoted via the website, newsletter, social media and local press.

CAPACITY BUILDING

- Erosion and sediment control compliance training for Council staff (Get The Site Right campaign).
- Presentations to member Councils by: Nona Ruddell, Fairfield City Council,on Council's Stormwater Audit Maintenance Program; Colin Mable (Bayside Council) on erosion remediation works at Lady Robinsons Beach; Enis Ruzdic (Bayside Council) on Council's Water Management Strategy; Craig Donarski (Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre Director) on Liverpool City Council's cultural facility; and Tim Pritchard and Michelle Chung (NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment) on the NSW Government's Risk-Based Framework for Healthy Waterways Outcomes.
- The Coastal Management Program Study Tour also enabled Councils to share unique features and challenges in their LGA with all attendees.

MEDIA

10 PRESS RELEASES

892,000 PEOPLE REACHED*

*Estimated

WEBSITE

30,000 USERS

SOCIAL MEDIA

1,822 FACEBOOK FANS

508 FACEBOOK POSTS

246 INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

FINANCIAL REPORT
GEORGES RIVERKEEPER 2019/20

	LAST YEAR (2018/19)	THIS YEAR (2019/20)
INCOME	**$**	**$**
Membership and Program fees	440,560	469,268
Operating Grants	46,800	34,400
Interest	13,275	9,136
Other Revenue	33,207	
TOTAL INCOME	**533,842**	**512,804**
EXPENSES		
Employee benefits expense	388,043	452,462
Depreciation and amortisation expense	15,455	8,425
Materials & Contracts	199,305	160,350
Other expenses	55,472	36,234
TOTAL EXPENSES	**658,275**	**657,471**
NET OPERATING RESULT	**(124,433)**	**(144,667)**

ENVIRONMENT RESTORATION FUND GRANT

Improving the Health of the Georges River: Zero Litter in Georges River

Under the Environment Restoration Fund Grant, $700,000 in funding has been awarded from the Australian Government. The project commenced in April 2020 and will conclude in March 2023. Via a Steering Committee, member Councils (Campbelltown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Fairfield, Georges River, Liverpool and Sutherland Shire) will help to reduce litter/waste impacts on Georges River waterways via undertaking gross pollutant trap (GPT) audits; priority GPT projects; community engagement/education; and research.

Australian Government

Gross Pollutant Trap

MEMBERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Georges Riverkeeper acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Georges River, the Kamegal, Bedigal, Cabrogal, Cannemegal, Gweagal and Norongerral people of the Eora, Dharug and Dharawal nations and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

EXECUTIVE GROUP

- Chairperson: Clr Geoff Shelton, Liverpool City Council
- Vice-Chairperson: Clr Peter Scaysbrook, Sutherland Shire Council
- Treasurer: Clr Adrian Wong, Fairfield City Council
- Georges Riverkeeper Program Manager: Beth Salt (1 July 2019 – November 2019) Peter Ryan (March 2020 – June 2020)
- Georges Riverkeeper Host Manager: Fiona Stock, Georges River Council (1 July 2019 – January 2020) Andrew Spooner, Georges River Council (Jan 2020 – June 2020)

COUNCILLORS OF MEMBER COUNCILS

- Bayside Council: Clr Andrew Tsounis
- Campbelltown City Council: Clr Darcy Lound, Clr Ben Moroney
- City of Canterbury Bankstown: Clr Khal Asfour, Clr Alex Kuskoff
- Fairfield City Council: Clr Adrian Wong
- Georges River Council: Clr Warren Tegg
- Liverpool City Council: Clr Geoff Shelton, Clr Peter Harle
- Sutherland Shire Council: Clr Peter Scaysbrook, Clr Tom Croucher
- Wollondilly Shire Council: Clr Michael Banasik

GEORGES RIVERKEEPER STAFF

- Program Manager: Beth Salt (1 July 2019 – November 2019) Peter Ryan (March 2020 – June 2020)
- Program Coordinator, Environmental Officer: Tony Wales (July 2019 - August 2019) Lachlan Prentice (July 2019 – November 2019) Robert Dixon (September 2019 – June 2020)
- Program Coordinator, Aquatic Ecologist: Dr David Reid
- Administration Officer: Lisa Smith
- Communications Officer: Kirsten Spry

STAFF REPRESENTATIVES OF MEMBER COUNCILS

- Bayside Council: Alexandra Vandine, Enis Rudzic, Stewart Harris
- Campbelltown City Council: Mitchell Clark, Mathew Misdale, Michael Ellison
- City of Canterbury Bankstown: David Dekel, Daniela Santucci, David Lowery, Joanne McDonnell, Paul Angel
- Fairfield City Council: Leonie Gray, Rob Stevenson, Nona Ruddell, Helen Pollard, Scott Reyes
- Georges River Council: Andrew Spooner, Fiona Stock, Damien Duggan, Lachlan Prentice
- Liverpool City Council: Raj Autar, Madhu Pudasaini, Maruf Hossain, Joel Daniels, Sai Natarajan, Biljana Jovanovic, Alexi Gilchrist
- Sutherland Shire Council: Ian Drinnan, Nathan Varley, Kevin Seymour, Brendan Graham, Graham Avery, Erin Sellers
- Wollondilly Shire Council: Alex Stengl, Bruce Devonport, Damion Stirling

PARTNERSHIPS

- Australian Government
- Conservation Volunteers Australia
- Cooks River Alliance
- Greater Sydney Local Land Services
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils
- Macquarie University
- Member Councils' Aboriginal Advisory Groups
- NSW Department of Education – Georges River Environmental Education Centre
- NSW Department of Justice - Corrective Services
- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
- NSW Environmental Trust
- NSW Environment Protection Authority
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Parramatta River Catchment Group
- Sydney Coastal Councils Group
- University of Newcastle
- University of Sydney
- UNSW Sydney
- Western Sydney University

GENERAL MEETING ATTENDEES

- Botany Bay Catchment Alliance
- Department of Primary Industries – Fisheries
- Friends of Oatley
- Georges River Environmental Alliance
- Lower Georges River Sustainability Initiative
- NSW Roads and Maritime Services
- Sydney Water

(L-R) David Reid, Lisa Smith, Kirsten Spry, Beth Salt, Lachlan Prentice, Fiona Stock

(L-R) Peter Ryan, Robert Dixon, David Reid, Lisa Smith

Georges Riverkeeper

Georges Riverkeeper is an alliance of Councils with collective responsibility for the Georges River and its catchment.

www.georgesriver.org.au

Bayside Council
Serving Our Community

CAMPBELLTOWN

CANTERBURY BANKSTOWN

FairfieldCity
Celebrating diversity

GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL

LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL

SUTHERLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

Wollondilly Shire Council

NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE NSW

NSW GOVERNMENT Justice Corrective Services

Georges Riverkeeper is the business name of Georges River Combined Councils' Committee Incorporated (ABN: 182 467 92704)