



GR Georges
Riverkeeper
ANNUAL REPORT
2022/23

GEORGES RIVERKEEPER EXECUTIVE GROUP REPORT



Councillor Michael Banasik
Wollondilly Shire Council
Chairperson
Jul. 2022 – Nov. 2022



Councillor George Barcha
Fairfield City Council
Chairperson
Nov. 2022 – Jun. 2023



Councillor Matthew Stellino
Campbelltown City Council
Vice-Chairperson
Jul. 2022 – Nov. 2022



Councillor Paul Sedrak
Bayside Council
Vice-Chairperson
Nov. 2022 – Jun. 2023



Councillor Stephen Nikolovski
Sutherland Shire Council
2nd Vice-Chairperson
Nov. 2022 – Jun. 2023



Councillor Rey Manoto
Campbelltown City Council
Treasurer
Jul. 2022 – Nov. 2022



Councillor Peter Mahoney
Georges River Council
Treasurer
Nov. 2022 – Jun. 2023



Scott Reyes
Georges Riverkeeper
Program Manager
Jul. 2022 – Jun. 2023



Ian Drinnan
Sutherland Shire Council
Host Manager
Jul. 2022 – Jun. 2023

Georges Riverkeeper Executive Group comprises four Office Bearers; Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, 2nd Vice-Chairperson and Treasurer, and are supported by the Program Manager, Host Manager and Administration and Project Support Officer. Office Bearers are members of our General Committee and are elected by Member Councillors. Meeting monthly, the Executive Group oversees the management and



GEORGES RIVER
CATCHMENT

functioning of Georges Riverkeeper - reviewing financial management, operations, and programs and keeping Member Councils informed so that key decisions can be made at General Committee Meetings.

This year, the Georges Riverkeeper Executive Group assisted in executing the first year of the Strategic Plan 2022 to 2026 through the implementation the 2022/2023 Annual Workplan. This consisted of finalising the 'Litter Prevention Strategy', continuing litter collections with Member Councils, and developing and adopting the Annual Work Plan 2023/2024 and corresponding budget. In addition, the Executive Group confirmed commitments to

progress stages 2 to 4 of the Georges River Catchment Coastal Management Program (CMP) and oversaw progress on the 'Zero Litter in Georges River' Environmental Restoration Fund Grant with our Member Councils.

The Executive Group would like to thank the Georges Riverkeeper team and its Member Councils (Bayside Council, Campbelltown City Council, City of Canterbury Bankstown, Fairfield City Council, Georges River Council, Liverpool City Council, Sutherland Shire Council and Wollondilly Shire Council), council representatives, stakeholders and community representatives for their support and contribution throughout the year.

GEORGES RIVERKEEPER PROGRAM MANAGER'S REPORT



Scott Reyes
Georges Riverkeeper
Program Manager
Jul. 2023

Georges Riverkeeper has commenced the implementation of the first year of our Strategic Plan 2022 to 2026 and made significant strides throughout a very challenging year with reduced team capacity and limited resources. The loss of two members of a five-person team within six months has not been easy, but the team has banded together to deliver for our Member Councils and partners under difficult circumstances.

In partnership with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), Georges Riverkeeper was successful in delivering a 'Litter Prevention Strategy' for the Georges River catchment. In addition, the team successfully implemented the final milestones of the 'Zero Litter in Georges River' Environmental Restoration Fund Grant with our Member Councils, despite requiring a time extension due to extreme weather events. Georges Riverkeeper were also successful

in securing financial support from Member Councils to further progress the Georges River Catchment Coastal Management Program: Stages 2 - 4 through Coastal and Estuary Grants.

It would not have been possible for Georges Riverkeeper to achieve this without the generous hosting arrangement with Sutherland Shire Council (SSC). The Georges Riverkeeper team and Executive Group would like to say a huge thank you to the whole SSC team for their invaluable input and support.

Georges Riverkeeper are excited about the new challenges of the 2023/2024 financial year and are already at work implementing our programs and projects with Member Councils, partners, and stakeholders as we strive to achieve best practice management for a liveable urban river.

ZERO LITTER IN GEORGES RIVER

In a joint endeavour involving Georges Riverkeeper, six Member Councils, primary schools, and local communities, the 'Zero Litter in Georges River' project is tackling stormwater pollution. With 95% of the Georges River's pollution originating from stormwater runoff, this initiative funded by the Australian Government is reducing litter in stormwater channels and waterways. The program has upgraded crucial stormwater infrastructure including Gross Pollutant Traps (GPTs) at five sites within participating council areas. The project has audited 72 GPTs, enhancing operations across 2,884.7 hectares, and produced a best-practice guide for the stormwater and environmental industries. School and community engagement has been very successful, empowering 564 primary school students to educate their local communities through lessons, videos, and anti-litter artworks. Augmented reality experiences near artworks allow interaction with 'Zero', a long-neck turtle - emblematic of the river's vulnerability, serving as a portal to online resources and educational videos created by Georges Riverkeeper. zerolitter.georgesriver.org.au



This project received grant funding from the Australian Government's Environmental Restoration Fund program.



CATCHMENT ACTIONS PROGRAM LITTER & BIODIVERSITY

LITTER REMOVAL

We all hate to see litter in our waterways. Not only does it detract from the natural appeal, but it endangers wildlife and harbours dangerous chemicals. Through Georges Riverkeeper's Litter Collection Program, 91 tonnes of litter were removed from the Georges River catchment this year. That equates to over 5,900 large garbage bags of litter removed before it could cause further damage to the Georges River and its catchment.

Co-ordinated through Georges Riverkeeper's Catchment Actions Program, litter collection teams from Corrective Services NSW head out to parks, beaches, creeks, river foreshores and industrial areas seven days a week. Thanks to the support of our Member Councils, the program continues to expand with the addition of eight new litter collection sites in 2022/2023.

RUBBISH REMOVED FROM THE RIVER SYSTEM 2022/23



RUBBISH BY SUBCATCHMENT 2022/23



UPPER RIVER MID RIVER LOWER RIVER



CATCHMENT ACTIONS PROGRAM LITTER & BIODIVERSITY

LITTER PREVENTION

In 2022/2023 Georges Riverkeeper worked on behalf of, and in consultation with Member Councils to develop a 'Litter Prevention Strategy' for the Georges River catchment. Input was also received from community organisations such as So-Shire and Conservation Volunteers Australia. The strategy's development is a NSW Environment Protection Authority, Waste Less Recycle More initiative funded from the waste levy. The strategy will be a guide for future action on preventing litter that Member Councils, Georges Riverkeeper, and others can utilise to prevent litter entering the catchment.



Our strategy sets three directions and 10 initiatives for litter prevention

Building awareness and knowledge

- Putting litter prevention back on the agenda
- Understanding the cost of litter
- Building on councils' existing knowledge and litter management data

Involve Partners

- Building on the experience of Georges Riverkeeper and councils engaging with schools
- Working with community groups with shared interests
- Developing an improved understanding and approach to involving CALD communities
- Working with other organisations

Take a strategic approach

- Focusing attention on litter prevention in industrial areas
- Planning for litter prevention in the context of significant development
- Continue the integrated litter-stormwater management approach commenced with the 'Zero Litter in Georges River' project

BIODIVERSITY

The Georges River catchment boasts much biodiversity, yet urbanization threatens some of it. Georges Riverkeeper collaborates with Member Councils and stakeholders to help protect this biodiversity.

In the ongoing partnership with Fairfield City Council and NSW Corrective Services this year, we enhanced seven endangered Cumberland Plain Woodland sites. Volunteers contributed 1,400 hours, removing invasive weeds, enabling native plants to flourish.

Additionally, Georges Riverkeeper, in conjunction with the City of Canterbury Bankstown, completed an \$11,000 grant project targeting the invasive Balloon Vine which is choking native riparian vegetation along Prospect Creek. This Project has been assisted by the NSW DPI Fisheries' Recreational Fishing Trust's "Habitat Action Grant Program".

Working closely with Member Council biosecurity officers, we remain vigilant against priority weed proliferation in the catchment, conducting eight comprehensive inspections throughout the year.

Our commitment to the long-term shorebird monitoring project with the Australian Waders Studies Group and Local Land Services continues. Migratory shorebirds, some from as far as Alaska, inhabit the lower estuary of the Georges River annually. Sadly, some of these species face extinction. In 2022/2023, Georges Riverkeeper extended predator-free roosting habitat by 20 meters to support these birds.





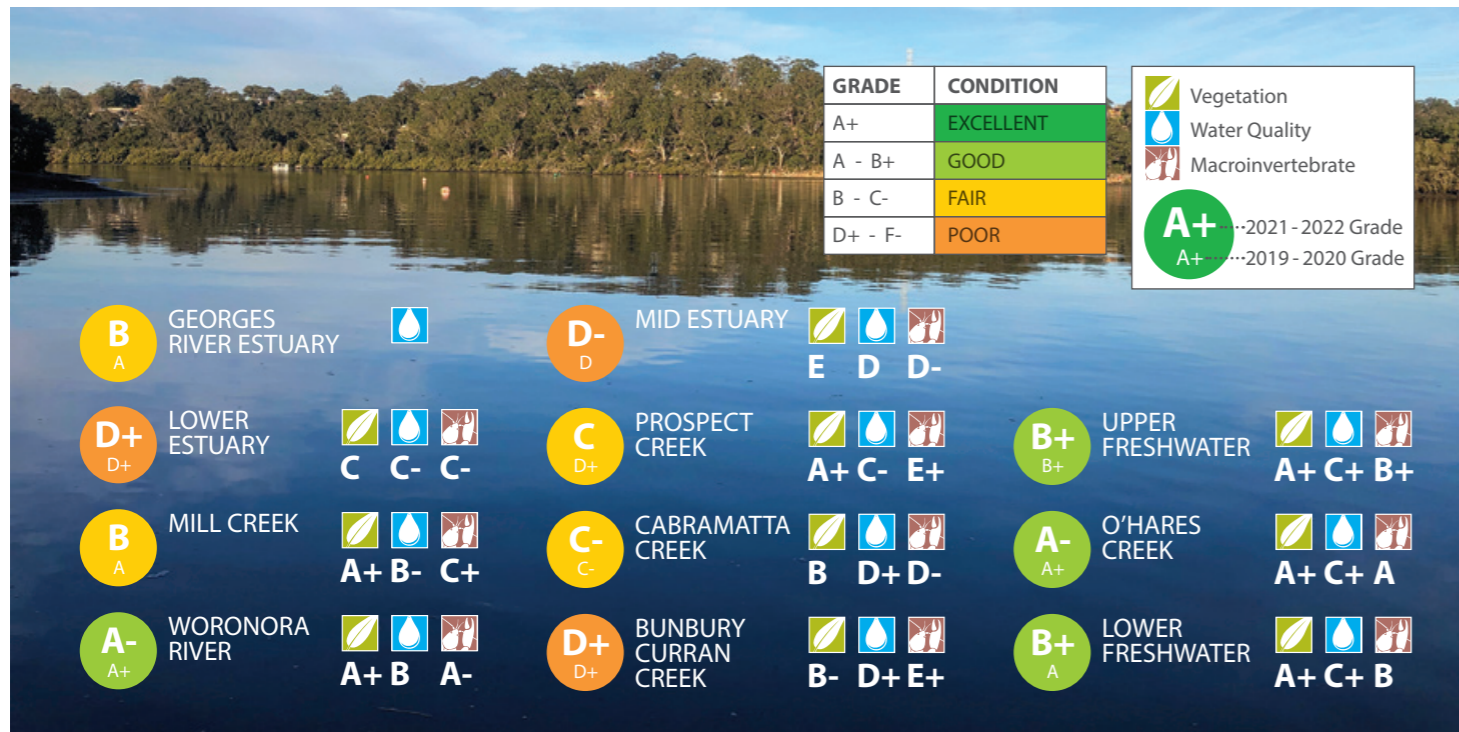
RIVER HEALTH & RESEARCH PROGRAM

The River Health Monitoring Program was established in 2009 using scientifically rigorous methods to monitor freshwater tributaries and estuarine sections of the Georges River. The information from this monitoring is communicated to Member Councils and facilitates efficient and effective management of resources and waterway improvements. River health data is also used to communicate the relative condition of the waterways of the Georges River catchment to the broader community.

In 2022/2023 Georges Riverkeeper published the 2022 River Health Report Card (georgesriver.org.au/resources/georges-river-report-card-2021-2022). Results showed

some improvements in water quality compared to the previous report card, with grades within the Prospect Creek catchment improving. However, overall health grades were slightly lower than previously reported, with higher levels of rainfall and flooding in the catchment potentially affecting the results.

This year Georges Riverkeeper assisted the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) in developing their new water quality objectives, with our extensive water quality dataset providing valuable input in developing guidelines for coastal rivers and estuaries.



Georges Riverkeeper also monitors microplastic in the river. Australian Microplastics Assessment Project (AUSMAP) methods were used to assess microplastic pollution across ten shorelines throughout the Georges River catchment in 2022/2023. Results from this sampling were lower than previous years, but still quite concerning in some locations. For example, 153 microplastics were identified and analysed in one 0.25m2 quadrat sample on the Chipping Norton Lake foreshore.

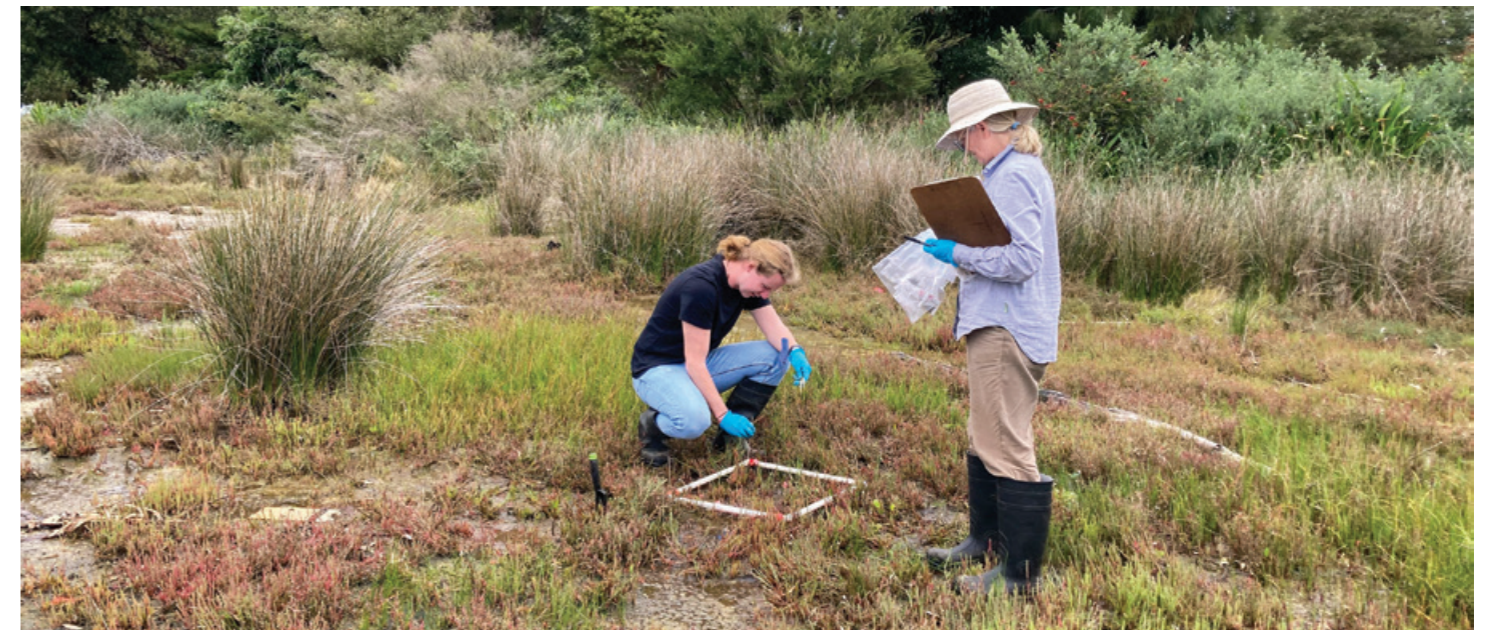
In an urban catchment like the Georges River, there is an ever-present risk of harmful pollutants entering waterways. Georges Riverkeeper assists in monitoring pollution incidents within the catchment's waterways in collaboration with Member Councils and relevant agencies. In 2022/2023 this included monitoring of Blue Green Algae levels after an outbreak in Chipping Norton Lakes. Georges Riverkeeper worked with Water NSW and Fairfield City Council to keep the community informed and monitor the situation. In addition Georges Riverkeeper contributed data to NSW EPA and NSW Primary Industries - Fisheries following mangrove dieback at Kurnell that has been associated with an oil spill incident.



RIVER HEALTH & RESEARCH PROGRAM

The Research Program was established in 2018 to improve our knowledge of the impacts of urbanisation on our rivers and contribute to our understanding of best practice waterway management for a livable urban river. This year we assisted a Macquarie University PhD student project focused on investigating differences in carbon decomposition between natural and restored saltmarshes.

Working with the University of Newcastle and The Nature Conservancy, Georges Riverkeeper assisted with a project investigating migratory shorebird use of mudflats that contain remnant oyster reefs. The results of which will inform future shellfish reef restoration projects in the Georges River estuary and elsewhere.





STORMWATER & SEWAGE PROGRAM

Georges Riverkeeper's Stormwater Program has now expanded to include sewage, another major source of pollution within the Georges River catchment. As stormwater and sewerage infrastructure is the responsibility of either individual councils or Sydney Water (both of which work with Georges Riverkeeper), our goal is to have a marked impact on point source pollution to improve the water quality of the Georges River and its tributaries.

GET THE SITE RIGHT

'Get the Site Right' is a joint taskforce between local councils, Georges Riverkeeper, Cooks River Alliance, Parramatta River Catchment Group, Sydney Coastal Councils Group, NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), and Water NSW.



A week-long blitz was held in Oct. 2022 and a month-long campaign was held in May. 2023. Members of the public are encouraged to report environmental and stormwater pollution incidents, including poor sediment control to their local council or via the NSW EPA's 24-hour Environment Line on 131 555.

	OCT 2022	MAY 2023	CHANGE	
● PARTICIPATING AGENCIES	19	22	↑ 3	✓
🏠 SITES INSPECTED	654*	825	↑ 171	✓
✓ COMPLIANT SITES	361 (55%)	502 (61%)	↑ 6%	✓
✗ NON-COMPLIANT SITES	293(45%)	323 (39%)	↓ 6%	✓
💰 FINES ISSUED	\$596,064	\$376,789	↓ \$219,275	✓

*Based on sites that recorded compliance; 160 sites were not defined.



GEORGES RIVER CATCHMENT COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Over the last year Georges Riverkeeper has led progress on this project in consultation with the Georges River Catchment Coastal Management Program Project Control Group which includes representatives from all Member Councils. Georges Riverkeeper has now completed the Stage 1 Scoping Study and the accompanying report has been accepted by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE).

Georges Riverkeeper is now working closely with Member Councils to move through the next stages of the project by hosting presentations by DPE representatives to highlight the benefits of a Coastal Management Program (CMP) and by facilitating site inspections within individual

local government areas to promote a whole of catchment approach for this CMP.

Georges Riverkeeper were recently successful in confirming continued support and financial contributions from Member Councils for Stages 2 to 4. Georges Riverkeeper and DPE representatives worked collaboratively on an Expression of Interest (EOI) which has been provided via open market to consultants to ascertain interest and their experience in the development of a CMP. Assessments of these EOIs are continuing with the assistance of Sutherland Shire Councils Procurement team and will soon be complete.



EDUCATION & CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM

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

COMMUNICATIONS

Georges Riverkeeper uses the website georgesriver.org.au, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, quarterly e-news and media relations to ensure the community can enjoy the river, learn about the river and help the river. Campaigns during the year focused on 'Zero Litter in Georges River' (see pg.3), 'Plastic Free July', #EnjoyTheRiver, 'Get the Site Right', and 'Clean Up Australia Day'. Promotions resulted in 1,325 factsheet downloads, 250 Georges River Report Card 2021-2022 downloads, and 269 education module downloads and google site visits.

37,540
WEBSITE USERS*
*Google Analytics

7 PRESS RELEASES
3,250,248 READERSHIP*
*Estimated, combined

86,753 ANNUAL FACEBOOK REACH*
11,613 LINKED IN IMPRESSIONS**
6,326 ANNUAL INSTAGRAM REACH*
*Facebook Insights. **Dashthis Report

EVENTS AND EDUCATION

- Westfield Hurstville 'SeaSustainability', Aug. 2022.
- Hazelhurst Regional Arts Centre 'FutureFest' (Sustainability), Aug. 2022.
- Promotion of Stage 3 education resources to teachers for Science Week, Aug. 2022.
- 1st Wearne Bay Sea Scouts Group, Sept. 2022.
- Sutherland Shire Bushcare Fair, Sept. 2022.
- Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre 'WOW Festival', Sept. 2022.
- Fairfield City Council 'Litter in Creeks Workshop', Sept. 2022.
- St George's Fishing Club, Oct. 2022.
- Conservation Volunteers Australia 'Walk & Talk at Tonbridge Creek', Nov. 2022.
- Liverpool Environmental Advisory Committee, Jun. 2023.
- 'World Environment Day' bush walk and talk with Campbelltown City Council Bushcare, Jun. 2023.
- Conservation Volunteers Australia '#seatosource National Day of Action', Feb. 2023.
- 'Bugwatch' with Lady of Mercy Catholic College Burraneer, Mar. 2023.
- Georges River Environment Education Centre showed Georges Riverkeeper education videos to approx. 5,098 students.

WEBINARS

- Sept. 2022: 'Urban Plunge – making our waterways swimmable', with Nerida Taylor and Michelle Washington, Sydney Water.
- Dec. 2022: 'Water Quality, what is it good for?' with Marion Huxley, Georges Riverkeeper; Jocelyn Dela-Cruz, Department of Planning and Environment (DPE); and Mathew Misdale, Campbelltown City Council.
- Mar. 2023: 'Riverine and Coastal Erosion' with Craig Naughton, City of Canterbury Bankstown, Colin Mable, Bayside Council, and Jason Bishop, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services.
- Jun. 2023: 'Cutting Edge Investigations into Litter in our Waterways and Gross Pollutant Traps' with Justine Barrett, CSIRO, and Ben Wolfram, Australian Wetlands Consulting Pty Ltd.

PADDLE AGAINST PLASTIC

Sixty-seven volunteers cleaned up habitat at essential fish nurseries, Scarborough Ponds and Tonbridge Creek in Kogarah, for Georges Riverkeeper's 'Paddle Against Plastic' on 4 Mar. 2023. The volunteers removed 100kg of pollution using kayaks, canoes, paddle boards and bankside teams. The 'Clean Up Australia Day' event was held in partnership with Georges Riverkeeper, Bayside Council and the River Canoe Club, and focused on the removal of plastic waste including packaging, polystyrene, containers, and plastic fragments.





OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

In 2022/23, Georges Riverkeeper was pleased to welcome Sydney Water as a financial partner, allowing for more substantial collaboration between our two organisations.

This year Georges Riverkeeper held four in-person General Committee Meetings and one Annual General Meeting. These were generously hosted by various Member Councils on a roster system. In addition, nine Executive Group Meetings were held to progress vital operational matters, programs, projects, and grants in between General Committee Meetings.

Member Councils utilised the Riverkeeper boat and skipper (Robert Dixon) for many inspections of aquatic weeds and bank erosion on the Georges River foreshore, and the Program Manager, Scott Reyes progressed the replacement of our ageing Georges Riverkeeper vehicles with Host Councils Fleet Management team.

The Georges Riverkeeper team continued to work hard this year on building our knowledge and capacity. Our Aquatic Ecologist, Marion Huxley attended 'eDNA' – a 4-day online conference in Feb. 2023, participating in interesting discussions with researchers. Marion also attended a 2-day 'Franc Conference' in Sydney in Mar. 2023 with speakers focusing on innovation, technology, and the environment. Our Environmental Officer, Robert Dixon attended a 2-day field training in 'Australian Litter Measures' provided by the EPA in Newcastle in Nov. 2022, as well as training in 'Preparation of Wetland Management Plans' provided by Sydney Olympic Park Authority in May. 2023. He renewed his chemical application and storage certificate in May. 2023. Our Communications Officer, Kirsten Spry undertook 'Stakeholder Engagement' training with the International Association of Public Participation in Jun. 2023.

FINANCIAL REPORT GEORGES RIVERKEEPER 2022/23

	LAST YEAR (2021/22)	THIS YEAR (2022/23)
INCOME	\$	\$
Membership and Program fees	483,451	653,880
Operating Grants	206,000	85,259
Interest	366	30,152
Other Revenue	4,295	4,700
TOTAL INCOME	694,112	773,991
EXPENSES		
Employee benefits expense	448,532	436,705
Depreciation and amortisation expense	590	501
Materials & Contracts	226,022	423,935
Other expenses		
TOTAL EXPENSES	675,144	861,141
NET OPERATING RESULT	18,968	-87,150

MEMBERS & STAKEHOLDERS

Georges Riverkeeper acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Georges River, the Kamegal, Bedagal, 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: Cr Michael Banasik, Wollondilly Shire Council; Cr George Barcha, Fairfield City Council.
- Vice-Chairperson: Cr Matthew Stellino, Campbelltown City Council; Cr Paul Sedrak, Bayside Council.
- 2nd Vice-Chairperson: Cr Stephen Nikolovski, Sutherland Shire Council.
- Treasurer: Cr Rey Manoto, Campbelltown City Council; Cr Peter Mahoney, Georges River Council.
- Georges Riverkeeper Program Manager: Scott Reyes.
- Georges Riverkeeper Host Manager: Ian Drinnan, Sutherland Shire Council.

COUNCILLORS OF MEMBER COUNCILS

- Bayside Council: Cr Paul Sedrak, Cr Andrew Tsounis.
- Campbelltown City Council: Cr Masud Khalil, Cr Rey Manoto, Cr Matthew Stellino.
- City of Canterbury Bankstown: Cr David Walsh.
- Fairfield City Council: Cr George Barcha, Cr Kevin Lam, Cr Carmen Lazar OAM.
- Georges River Council: Cr Peter Mahoney.
- Liverpool City Council: Cr Peter Harle, Cr Fiona MacNaught.
- Sutherland Shire Council: Cr Hassan Awada, Cr Stephen Nikolovski, Cr Haris Strangas.
- Wollondilly Shire Council: Cr Michael Banasik.

GEORGES RIVERKEEPER STAFF

- Program Manager: Scott Reyes.
- Project Coordinator, Environmental Officer: Robert Dixon.
- Program Coordinator, Aquatic Ecologist:

Marion Huxley, (position vacant).

- Administration and Project Support Officer: Kalynda Georgiades, Lydia Smithers.
- Communications Officer: Kirsten Spry.

STAFF REPRESENTATIVES OF MEMBER COUNCILS AND FINANCIAL PARTNERS

- Bayside Council: Judith Betts, Colin Mable, Hong Nguyen, Peter Ryan, Pulak Saha.
- Campbelltown City Council: Michaela Beattie, Mitchell Clark, Michael Ellison, Cathy Kinsey, Mathew Misdale.
- City of Canterbury Bankstown: Paul Angel, David Lowery, Sasha Marosevac, Sean Mooney, Craig Naughton, Corinne Pickering, Lachlan Prentice, Asad Suman.
- Fairfield City Council: Farid Shahbazi Dashti, Eddie Ferry, Leonie Gray, Helen Pollard, Robert Stevenson.
- Georges River Council: Elyse Ballesty, Emma Burnell, Tom Heath, Fiona O'Brien, Sean Simpson, Andrew Spooner.
- Liverpool City Council: Joel Daniels, Alexi Gilchrist, James Henderson, Maruf Hossain, Roshan Khadka, Anna Kyriotis, Michelle Playford, Madhu Pudasaini, Waliminipeli Siripala.
- Sutherland Shire Council: Ian Drinnan, Brendan Graham, Joga Jayanti, Andrew Reid, Kevin Seymour, Nathan Varley.
- Wollondilly Shire Council: Ian Berthon, Ibrahim Muharrem.
- Sydney Water: Nathan Harrison, Lyndall Pickering.

STAKEHOLDERS

- Australian Government
- Australian Microplastics Assessment Project (AUSMAP)
- Australian Waders Studies Group
- Botany Bay Catchment Alliance
- Conservation Volunteers Australia
- Cooks River Alliance
- Corrective Services NSW
- CSIRO
- Friends of Oatley
- Greater Sydney Local Land Services
- Lands and Water – Crown Lands
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils
- Macquarie University
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- NSW Department of Education – Georges River Environmental Education Centre
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment
- NSW Department of Primary Industries - Fisheries
- NSW Environment Protection Authority
- Parramatta River Catchment Group
- So-Shire
- Sydney Coastal Councils Group
- The Nature Conservancy
- Transport for NSW – Maritime Services
- University of New South Wales
- Water NSW



GR Georges Riverkeeper

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

www.georgesriver.org.au



MEMBERS

There are many different stakeholders and landowners in the Georges River catchment who all have a responsibility to manage their land in a way that ensures there is a minimal impact on the river and its ecosystems.

Hosted by



PARTNERS

Financial partner



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