



Newsletter No. 2 - 18<sup>th</sup> February 2008

## Some changes to the RiverConnect connections

The Greater Shepparton City Council agreed to become the auspice body for the RiverConnect Project at an ordinary Council meeting on 4 December 2007. The Council also formally acknowledged RiverConnect as a priority project within the Greater Shepparton Community Action Plan.

The move came after a decision to foster RiverConnect as a community orientated initiative, rather than a Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GB CMA) works program making the Council the logical auspicing body.

To aid the transition, and coordinate the project, Cindy Doherty was appointed RiverConnect Coordinator on 1 October 2007 based at the Council in a position jointly funded by the GB CMA and the Council. Cindy's role will initially focus on the development of the RiverConnect Master Plan and an associated prospectus while also providing support to the Community Advisory Committee and working groups.

The steering committee, set-up in 2005 by the GB CMA, has now been phased out and replaced by the RiverConnect Community Advisory Committee (RCCAC). Like the steering committee, the RCCAC will be made up of key stakeholders in the Shepparton-Mooroopna RiverConnect area and supported by four working groups. The newly formed Elders Reference Group will also contribute their discussions to the RCCAC.

All the working groups met in the last two weeks of January followed by the first meeting of the RCCAC on 31 January 2008. The Mayor Eric Bott was elected as Chairman and Anne McCamish as Deputy Chair. The next meeting of the group will be held on Wednesday 5 March where the master plan will be discussed in more detail.



*The Goulburn River at the Reedy Swamp - picture provided by Cindy Doherty*



For More Information Please Contact:  
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 In partnership with: Dept Sustainability And Environment, Dept. Primary Industries, Word And Mouth,  
 Yorta Yorta Joint Body, Yorta Yorta Nations, Rumbalara Coop, Goulburn Murray Landcare Network,  
 Greater Shepparton Principals Network, Parks Victoria, Fairley Foundation



## The Role of the RiverConnect Community Advisory Committee

The RCCAC will play an advisory role to the Council. The committee has no executive authority, but will:

- Provide direction, leadership and enable all community stakeholders to take part in the development and implementation of the master plan.
- Identify sources of funding for RiverConnect initiatives.
- Prioritise works associated with the master plan.
- Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the approved master plan.
- Ensure that RCCAC members are representative of all key stakeholders with an interest in the management and development of the Goulburn and Broken River floodplain between Shepparton and Mooroopna.
- Communicate the RiverConnect vision, master plan, funding arrangements and associated works to the wider community.
- Facilitate two-way communication between the community and the Council.
- Advocate on behalf of the community, including promotion of the approved master plan.

For more information on the RCCAC contact Cindy Doherty on 0358 329 714 or email:

[cindy.doherty@shepparton.vic.gov.au](mailto:cindy.doherty@shepparton.vic.gov.au).

## Aboriginal Oral History Report

RiverConnect

Aboriginal Oral History Project

*The Cultural Landscape of the 'Flats'*



FINAL REPORT

Aboriginal people are advised that this Report contains images of deceased people

Developed by Seven Sisters Dreaming Pty Ltd  
November 2007

Lois Peeler of Seven Sisters Dreaming recently submitted the Aboriginal Oral History final report to the RCCAC.

The document records the oral histories of many local Aborigines who moved to the Shepparton - Mooroopna flats area after the historic Cummeragunja walk off. The report outlines their life on the river, attachment to its rhythms and the surrounding environment. It also addresses the struggles, achievements and contributions made by the Aboriginal community to the Greater Shepparton region.

The report will be developed into an edited and refined document for publication and distribution among local schools and libraries. It may also be useful for cultural awareness training.

The main use of the report initially will be to provide advice on the development of the master plan which will begin in 2008.

Lois has worked tirelessly on the report during the past eight months and her work has been outstanding. She has been strongly supported by contributors to the report, who generously donated time, thoughts and personal accounts to create this historical and invaluable document. Fairley Foundation has contributed to the funding of the research and have committed further funds towards the documents' completion. The final publication is hoped to be launched during Reconciliation Week in May this year.



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## Adopt-a-reach program

Wouldn't it be great if a group of people took responsibility for the rich environmental, economic and cultural resource found along the Goulburn and Broken rivers?

These are the thoughts of Dianne Hanna, Chair of the Education Working Group, who is putting this vision into action working with schools and allocating students a designated reach of the river. The idea was sparked in December 2006 when the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) students from Notre Dame College and Wanganui Park Secondary College worked with Dianne and chose habitat restoration work at Reedy Swamp and Jordan's Bend as their voluntary community work for their personal development unit.



*Notre Dame VCAL students installing Nesting Boxes at Reedy Swamp Nov 2007 – this area of land will be assigned to Notre Dame via the Adopt-a-reach program so the students can continue their good work.*

*Picture provided by Cindy Doherty*

The success of the VCAL programs encouraged the RiverConnect Education Working Group to expand the concept and work towards enabling more schools to join the Adopt-a-reach project for 2008.

"Schools will be encouraged to think beyond the usual important activities such as litter clean ups, revegetation programs and water quality testing," Dianne said.

"Through the project, students will develop an appreciation for the environment and understanding of Aboriginal history and culture.

This may be achieved through a wide range of activities including photography, textiles, drama, music, painting and poetry as well as ecological studies, map reading, team building tasks and canoe trips in the river environs.

"Some groups may wish to simply have a barbecue in the bush or go for a bike ride along the great bike trails in this area. Others may wish to take on the challenge of developing a community education program to address an environmental issue of concern."

The Adopt-a-reach project can be as simple or imaginative as resources allow. The project could be expanded beyond schools to link each school and its reach with local Aboriginal people, community groups and businesses.

"Everyone's involvement is welcome in this exciting project to help meet the RiverConnect objective of increasing community appreciation and custodianship of the Goulburn River as a social, economic, environmental, educational and cultural asset," Dianne said.

Anyone keen to get involved in voluntary work with students or sponsorship of a reach of the river, should contact Dianne on 58 289 281 or Cindy on 58329714.



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## Formation of a RiverConnect Elders Group

The RiverConnect Aboriginal Elders Group was formed recently as an advisory group.

The group, made up of local Aboriginal elders who contributed to the Aboriginal Oral History Report, will meet when necessary to provide advice on development of the master plan. The group will contribute to cultural heritage by providing historical and environmental advice to the RCCAC.

*"The River" – Artwork by Rebecca Atkinson*



## VCAL Program



Wanganui Park Secondary College VCAL students on a canoe water testing excursion – picture provided by Cindy Doherty.

The first year of the RiverConnect VCAL Personal Development unit for both Notre Dame and Wanganui Park Secondary colleges concluded with the end of 2007.

Notre Dame College carried out habitat restoration work at Reedy Swamp while Wanganui Park Secondary College concentrated on Jordan's Bend to fulfil their voluntary community work requirement for the VCAL personal development unit. Both schools will continue with the program next year.

McGuire College is keen to adopt the program in 2008 and Dianne Hanna continues to work on the logistics of implementing the program.



## Inspiration

*"To live by a river is  
to be kept  
in the heart of things."*

*John Haines*