

# Strategic Plan

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Prepared for Greater Shepparton City Council by:

**DG Consulting (Aus) Pty Ltd**

55 Casey Street, Tatura, 3616

PO Box 320, Tatura, 3616

Telephone 03 5824 3300

[admin@dgconsultants.com.au](mailto:admin@dgconsultants.com.au)

[www.dgconsultants.com.au](http://www.dgconsultants.com.au)

ABN 29 134 725 581



**DG**CONSULTING

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

In the past, Shepparton - Mooroopna has largely turned its back on the rivers at its door step. The built environment has not taken full advantage of the aesthetic values of the river system and their environmental, economic and cultural significance have been significantly undervalued.

In response to the groundswell of interest in the rivers and forests, preliminary discussions between the Greater Shepparton City Council, the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, other natural resource management groups, Aboriginal and educational organisations highlighted the merits of a multi-agency and whole of community approach to future management of the Goulburn and Broken Rivers and the surrounding red gum forests and floodplains between Shepparton and Mooroopna. This led to the establishment of the RiverConnect project.

The Greater Shepparton City Council auspices and supports the RiverConnect Community Advisory Committee (RCCAC), which is made up of representatives from various land management agencies, community organisations and the general community. The RCCAC has led the development of this strategic plan.

## Plan development

The mission of RiverConnect is to create a vibrant, more cohesive Greater Shepparton community through developing a strong sense of belonging and connection to our rivers. This will be achieved by understanding and enhancing the environmental, cultural, recreational and economic value of the rivers.

In formulating this strategic plan, the RCCAC has carefully considered the needs of the community based on previous studies, consultation undertaken by the CAC, together with its knowledge of a range of community issues. This has also been supplemented by a range of reports providing technical background on many of the issues considered in the planning process.

This is a strategic plan that establishes a vision for the future, and identifies a range of actions that could be undertaken to achieve this vision. It is not a “blueprint” with every future action fully detailed. Many of the actions will require further investigation to determine their detailed design and feasibility, and the implementation process will include structured, prioritised investigations to develop the necessary detail as funds become available for implementation.

## The RiverConnect area and current issues

The River Connect area covers the river frontages and forest floodplain areas adjacent to the Shepparton – Mooroopna urban zones, broadly within the following limits:

- Goulburn River: Seven Creeks confluence to north of Daldy Road.
- Broken River: Doyle’s Road to Goulburn River Confluence.

The population of Greater Shepparton is over 60,000 people. The region is home to a multi-cultural community, with people from all parts of the globe and includes over 6,000 Indigenous Australians – the largest Aboriginal population in regional Victoria.

The Goulburn and Broken Rivers are a source of water for drinking, food processing and agriculture. The primary, secondary and tertiary industries in the region all depend to varying degrees on reliable supplies of water. The Aboriginal community has extraordinarily strong links with the rivers and lands that stretch back through the ages.

The Goulburn is the largest river in Victoria, and the section from Lake Eildon to the River Murray (which Shepparton – Mooroopna is located within) has been declared a heritage river under the Heritage Rivers Act. This declaration aims to protect the significant nature conservation, recreation, scenic and cultural heritage attributes of the Goulburn River.

Work by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority in 2005 identified the significant economic, environmental, cultural and social values of the waterways in the RiverConnect area. These values have been impacted on by a range of activities, and the key threats to river health that were identified included bank erosion, channel modification, flow deviation, loss of instream habitat, stock access, reduced water quality and interruptions to wetland connectivity.

Consultation with the Shepparton and Mooroopna communities also identified concerns about a range of issues in relation to the river and forest areas. These consultations confirmed that many people in the community believe that these areas are very important, but they were also concerned about the threats to the local environment including rubbish dumping and water quality. The community was also keen to see improvements in access to the river and forest areas, improved signage (including interpretive signage) and improved access to information to build their knowledge of the area and its environment.

## Strategic directions

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

*Shepparton and Mooroopna will be widely recognised as river towns where features of living here include:*

- *a thriving natural environment*
- *a connection with that environment*
- *a culture that is enriched by the traditional owners' connection with the area*

*People value and respect our rivers and floodplains, whilst using them as part of their daily lives for recreation, relaxation and education. The community, government and land managers, together with the traditional owners, work in partnership to protect and enhance the value of our rivers.*

In order to achieve this vision, a range of actions have been identified. These actions are grouped into five complementary programs, to provide an integrated strategy for RiverConnect. Specific objectives have been developed for each action program. The action programs, their objectives and the linkage to delivery of the RiverConnect vision are shown diagrammatically below.



The key strategies to deliver the RiverConnect mission are summarised below:

### ***Connecting community***

In order to connect to our rivers, the community must be able to access the area in ways that are compatible with their lifestyles. The shared path network will be expanded to create interlinked paths that connect the Mooroopna and Shepparton communities to the river. In addition, access to the river's edge will be upgraded in strategic locations across the area so that residents can visit the river in reasonable proximity to where they live and provision will be made for improved access for people with a disability. There will also be upgrades to boating facilities at three existing sites within the area and the development of the Kialla landfill site will provide a landmark southern gateway to the area.

In conjunction with improving the physical access to the rivers and forests, there will be a co-ordinated program to encourage people to use these areas. This includes development of walking, cycling and canoeing tours for the area and the production of specially designed access maps to provide this information to the community. Shepparton already hosts a number of events and festivals and there will be strong push to incorporate activities based in or relating to the RiverConnect area in these events. Investigations will also be undertaken to examine the feasibility of new events, including a youth focussed music festival and a canoe "marathon" event.

### ***Connecting environment***

The quality, diversity and sustainability of the natural environment in the RiverConnect area underpin its value to the community. These aspects will be protected and enhanced through a co-ordinated program of land use planning, and implementing agreed developments at key sites including Tassicker's (The Boulevard, Shepparton), Gemmill's Swamp and Reedy Swamp. Vehicle tracks will be rationalised and better managed to protect the area and there will be an ongoing program to control rubbish dumping in the forest and on the floodplain. The GB CMA's RiverConnect Waterway Health Action Plan will guide improvements to water quality, revegetation and control of pest plants and animals. Implementation of these activities will have a strong focus on providing opportunities for community participation and building in activities that allow the community to learn more about their local environment.

### ***Connecting Aboriginal people***

There is a strong desire from many people in the community to better understand the rich and diverse legacy of Aboriginal history and culture unique to the region. The strategic plan sets out a range of activities intended to share this knowledge both within the Aboriginal community and with the wider community. Activities will include oral history sessions, schools activities, corroboree events and development of an historic trail in the Flats area and guided tours.

### ***Connecting education***

The Greater Shepparton community has a strong desire to learn more about all aspects of the RiverConnect area. Knowledge will improve understanding and appreciation of the area and build our connection to the rivers and forest. RiverConnect already has a strong educational program that involves primary and secondary schools using the RiverConnect area as an outdoor classroom through the Adopt-a-reach program. This will be continued, progressively improved and expanded to include tertiary institutions. A major cultural and interpretive centre, situated on the banks of the river adjacent to the central business area would provide a strong focus for a wide range of cultural and educational activities covering water, environment, sustainable development, Aboriginal culture and European settlement history. The plan proposes a detailed investigation of the feasibility and funding sources to develop such a centre, which would become a major asset and a hub for community based activity relating to the river. RiverConnect participation in a range of community events will also provide education opportunities for the community.

### ***Communication and consultation***

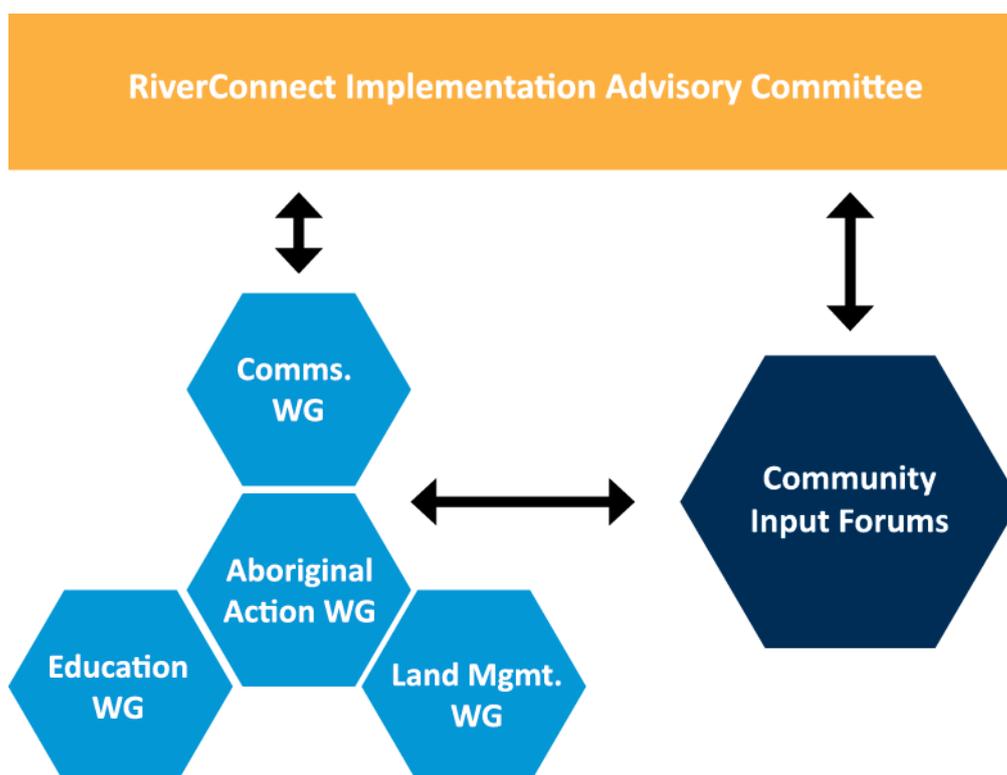
In order to fully realise the benefits of the RiverConnect program, the community needs to understand what opportunities are available to use and enjoy the area, how to participate in them and how to become more involved in aspects of the programs that are of particular interest. Communications will be improved through the development of an eNewsletter, a website, fact sheets, information kits and through the development of strong partnerships with key local media.

In addition, programs will be developed to market the RiverConnect opportunities to visitors to the region in partnership with local tourism groups.

## Implementation

Community input and involvement has been one of the strengths of the RiverConnect program to date. In order to ensure that the development of the RiverConnect program continues to be focussed on meeting the community's needs and preferences, an advisory committee which brings together representatives from key agencies, community organisations and the general community will be used to guide implementation of the strategic plan.

The Implementation Advisory Committee will also be supported by working groups that bring together the skills and expertise of the partner organisations and the community. Annual community forums will update the community on progress and enable input to guide further implementation activities (see diagram below). These forums will also be supplemented with specific community consultation on key projects as they are developed.



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

Each partner organisation will prepare their own individual budgets for RiverConnect activities and levels of activity will be dependent on overall availability of funding in each organisation. It is proposed that the RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee will be provided with information on the actions relating to RiverConnect proposed by each of the partner organisations, on an annual basis. This will allow the total spread of activity and funding across all partners to be better understood, and will enable essential co-ordination of complimentary activities across the total plan area.

### **Monitoring and review**

In order to gauge the effectiveness of this plan and to enable it to be adapted to changing needs and circumstances, a monitoring and assessment program has been proposed. Performance targets have been identified, largely using existing data sources wherever possible. Details of all specific performance measures and targets will also be further developed and refined in the first year of plan implementation.

The RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee will also oversee the production of an annual report. This will provide a total picture of activity by all partners relating to RiverConnect and will provide important public accountability about progress of the strategy.

It is proposed that after three years of implementation, the RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee will undertake a formal review of the plan to confirm that the objectives are still appropriate (or what modification may be needed) and to review the strategies and actions required to achieve those objectives, having regard for experience over the first three years of implementation.

# 1. Introduction

The RiverConnect Project seeks to capitalise on the Goulburn - Broken River system in the heart of the Shepparton and Mooroopna urban areas and to identify how these communities can increase their appreciation and custodianship of the Goulburn and Broken River system as a social, economic, environmental, educational and cultural asset.

RiverConnect aspires to see the Goulburn and Broken River system duly recognised as the life and soul of the Shepparton and Mooroopna communities. This dynamic concept will support a raft of existing and new alliances and activities drawing in the community to ultimately embrace the river and enjoy its many wonders.

In the past, Shepparton - Mooroopna has largely turned its back on the rivers at its door step. The built environment has not taken full advantage of the aesthetic values of the river system and their environmental, economic and cultural significance have been significantly undervalued.

However, in recent years there has been a growing appreciation of the significance of the Goulburn - Broken system. It is a vital artery, supplying water for homes, irrigation, food processing, industry and gardens. It also offers a beautiful and environmentally significant backdrop for recreation and is an enormously significant cultural heritage site for the Aboriginal population of Shepparton. There is a wealth of untapped secrets and opportunities around the river.

Many agencies, individuals and organisations are already involved with the river and its surrounds as landowners, traditional owners, asset managers or in the delivery of environmental planning and works. There has been a lack of integration and synergy in past activities and there were no processes in place to promote co-ordinated activity in the area.

In response to the groundswell of interest in the rivers and forests, preliminary discussions between the Greater Shepparton City Council (GSCC), the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA), other natural resource management groups, Aboriginal and educational organisations highlighted the merits of a multi-agency and whole of community approach to future management of the Goulburn and Broken Rivers and the surrounding red gum forests and floodplains between Shepparton and Mooroopna. This led to the establishment of the RiverConnect project.

The Greater Shepparton City Council auspices and supports the RiverConnect Community Advisory Committee (RCCAC), which is made up of representatives from various land management agencies, community organisations and the general community. The RCCAC has led the development of this strategic plan.

The collaborative linkages put in place as part of developing this plan have already yielded a range of significant benefits, including:

- A vibrant educational program has emerged and been adopted with great enthusiasm within the local school community.
- The various land managers are working more closely together to improve the health of the rivers and their environs.
- The Aboriginal community has grasped the opportunity to recognise, record and share its ancient relationship with the waterways and is participating in the development of a range of projects to document these traditions.

RiverConnect also recently received the Environment and Sustainability award at the 2010 Victorian Regional Achievement and Community awards.

This is a strategic plan that establishes a vision for the future, and identifies a range of actions that could be undertaken to achieve this vision. It is not a “blueprint” with every future action fully detailed. Many of the actions will require further investigation to determine their detailed design and feasibility, and the implementation process will include structured, prioritised investigations to develop the necessary detail as funds become available for implementation.

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

This plan provides a high level, integrated strategy to guide the activities of all of the partner groups working within the RiverConnect area. This will ensure a co-ordinated approach to enhancing the environmental, cultural, recreational and economic value of the rivers and will ensure that the available funds are directed to achieve the greatest possible benefit.

This will also be an adaptive strategy that learns by doing and experience gained through implementation will be used to review and improve the plan.

The River Connect area covers the river frontages and forest floodplain areas adjacent to the Shepparton – Mooroopna urban zones, broadly within the following limits (refer Figure 1):

- Goulburn River: Seven Creeks confluence to north of Daldy Road.
- Broken River: Doyle’s Road to Goulburn River Confluence.



## 2. Mission and Vision

The mission and vision statements are important beacons that articulate key directions for an organisation. The RiverConnect Community Advisory Committee has developed mission and vision statements for RiverConnect.

### 2.1. Mission

A mission statement articulates the fundamental purpose for a business or organisation. The mission of the RiverConnect project encapsulates the reason why RiverConnect exists.

*The mission of RiverConnect is to create a vibrant, more cohesive Greater Shepparton community through developing a strong sense of belonging and connection to our rivers.*

*This will be achieved by understanding and enhancing the environmental, cultural, recreational and economic value of the rivers.*

### 2.2. Vision

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

*Shepparton and Mooroopna will be widely recognised as river towns where features of living here include:*

- *a thriving natural environment*
- *a connection with that environment*
- *a culture that is enriched by the traditional owners' connection with the area*

*People value and respect our rivers and floodplains, whilst using them as part of their daily lives for recreation, relaxation and education. The community, government and land managers, together with the traditional owners, work in partnership to protect and enhance the value of our rivers.*

## 3. Objectives

Action is proposed under five key strategic themes In order to create change and achieve the vision for RiverConnect. Detailed objectives have been developed for each of these five strategic program areas to explicitly define what represents successful outcomes. The strategic programs and objectives are listed below:

- **Connecting Community**

To provide access and facilities, together with activities and information to enable the community to value the river and its environment and visit and enjoy this area as an integral part of their lifestyle.

- **Connecting Environment**

To protect, repair, enhance and sustain important river, wetland and forest environments, so that current and future generations can understand and enjoy natural river and redgum forest environments.

- **Connecting aboriginal people**

To provide programs, activities and facilities so that the whole community can understand and better appreciate the important historical and cultural significance this area holds for its traditional owners.

- **Connecting Education**

To provide opportunities for the education sector and the broader community to understand the environment, culture and importance of the area as a valuable asset to appreciate, enjoy and protect.

- **Communication and Consultation**

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

## 4. The current environment

Shepparton and Mooroopna are the major population centres within the City of Greater Shepparton. These twin cities sit on either side of the Goulburn River. The Broken River also flows into the Goulburn within the Shepparton urban area. The population of Greater Shepparton is over 60,000 people. The region is home to a multi-cultural community, with people from all parts of the globe and includes over 6,000 indigenous Australians – the largest Aboriginal population in Victoria.

Whilst the community is culturally diverse and drawn from widely differing backgrounds, a common element that unites us is that without the rivers, most of us would not live here.

The Goulburn and Broken Rivers are a source of water for drinking, food processing and agriculture. Our primary, secondary and tertiary industries are for the most part thriving and they all depend to varying degrees on reliable supplies of water. The Aboriginal community has extraordinarily strong links with the rivers and lands that stretch back through the ages. There are also strong links with this area in more recent history, when Aboriginal people walked off the Cummeragunga mission at Barmah and established settlements in the redgum forest between Shepparton and Mooroopna in an area known as “The Flats”.

The waterways in Shepparton and Mooroopna were an important source of economic, recreational and social activity in the early days of settlement. Over the last fifty years, the focus on utilisation of the area for economic benefit has increased and the quality of the rivers and their banks has declined. In parallel with this physical decline in the health of our rivers, people’s connection with this space has diminished as well.

The rivers gradually turned from a source of life and an important economic and social commodity to largely become a delivery channel for the harvesting, delivery and disposal of water. The waterway has been redirected away from the Shepparton town area, with complementary buildings and infrastructure removed. It is only in relatively recent years that the beauty, recreational and cultural values of the rivers has been appropriately recognised by non-Aboriginal people.

The Goulburn is the largest river in Victoria, and the section from Lake Eildon to the River Murray (which Shepparton – Mooroopna is located within) has been declared a heritage river under the Heritage Rivers Act. This legislation aims to protect public land in particular parts of rivers and river catchment areas in Victoria which have significant nature conservation, recreation, scenic or cultural heritage attributes. The key environmental and social values that led to this recognition of the Goulburn River include:

- Areas with intact understorey in river red gum open forest/woodland, and yellow box and grey box woodland/open forest communities, particularly downstream of Murchison;
- Areas of significant habitat for vulnerable or threatened wildlife including Squirrel gliders, Large-footed myotis, Barking march frogs, Barking owls and Brush-tailed phascogales;
- Native fish diversity and Murray cod habitat below Goulburn Weir;
- Macquarie perch habitat above Goulburn Weir;
- Fishing opportunities – especially for trout from Eildon to Yea River, and native species below Goulburn Weir;
- Canoeing opportunities from Eildon to Goulburn Weir;
- Cultural heritage sites, including the timber Chinaman’s Bridge, the steel-girder rail bridge at Seymour, Days Flour Mill at Murchison, Goulburn Weir, and the town water supply pump at Murchison; and
- Scenic landscapes – from Molesworth to Seymour, and from below Seymour to Echuca.

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GB CMA) developed a Regional River Health Strategy for the Goulburn and Broken Rivers in 2005. This study identified the significant economic, environmental, cultural and social values of the waterways in the RiverConnect area.

These values have been impacted on by a range of activities, and the key threats to river health that were identified included bank erosion, channel modification, flow deviation, loss of instream habitat, stock access, reduced water quality and interruptions to wetland connectivity.

Consultation undertaken by the RiverConnect Community Advisory Committee also canvassed the key issues that the community in the Shepparton and Mooroopna areas were concerned about in relation to the river and forest areas. These consultations confirmed that many people in the community believe that these areas are very important, but they were also concerned about the threats to the local environment including rubbish dumping and water quality. The community was also keen to see improvements in access to the river and forest areas, improved signage (including interpretive signage) and improved access to information to build their knowledge of the area and its environment.

The public land within the RiverConnect area is under the control of a number of different agencies including Greater Shepparton City Council (GSCC), the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and Parks Victoria. The recent declaration of the Shepparton Regional Park has included most of the public land adjacent to the rivers (including former state forest areas) into the new Regional Park, which now comes under the management of Parks Victoria.

Parks Victoria is also responsible for the management of the Lower Goulburn River National Park which now incorporates the former Reedy Swamp Wildlife Reserve. The State Government and Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation have entered into the “Yorta Yorta Co-operative Management Agreement”, which creates a forum for including the Yorta Yorta Nation in the management of major public lands within their traditional country including the entire RiverConnect area. The Agreement establishes an eight-member committee (5 members representing the Yorta Yorta peoples through Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation and 3 members representing the State) known as the Yorta Yorta Joint Body. The Joint Body will provide advice to the Minister for Environment and the Secretary of the Department of Sustainability and Environment in relation to management of the Designated Areas, including advice on the development and review of management plans, works programs and major developments.

In addition, the GB CMA has overarching responsibilities for environmental management and river health protection. RiverConnect is a complex area and effective, integrated management of the area to achieve better environmental, economic and social outcomes will require high levels of collaboration and cooperation by the organisations involved.

The other key issues that have been considered in the development of this strategy are:

- Potential for further growth of the Shepparton and Mooroopna urban areas.
- Government policies in relation to risks of climate change and impacts on future water availability.
- Proposals for recovery of water to improve environmental conditions in rivers and wetlands.
- Policies and strategies developed by local agencies, but particularly by Greater Shepparton City Council and GB CMA, including:
  - Regional River Health Strategy (GBCMA)
  - RiverConnect Waterway Health Action Plan (GBCMA)
  - Assessment of Crown Land Frontages in Urban Zones (GBCMA)
  - Various master plans for sites within the area. Including Kialla Landfill, Gemmill's Swamp, Victoria Park Lake, Kidstown etc. (GSCC and others)
  - Shepparton Stormwater Management Plan (GSCC)
  - The Community Action Plan (GSCC)
  - CBD Strategy (GSCC)
  - Public Health Plan (GSCC)
  - Community Development Framework (GSCC)

## 5. Strategic directions

In formulating this strategic plan, the RiverConnect Community Advisory Committee has carefully considered the needs of the community based on previous studies, consultation undertaken by the CAC, together with an understanding of a range of community issues. This has led to the identification of a series of actions that will support the RiverConnect mission and enable achievement of its vision.

These actions are grouped into five complementary programs, to provide an integrated strategy for RiverConnect. Specific objectives have been developed for each action program. The action programs, their objectives and the linkage to delivery of the RiverConnect vision are shown diagrammatically in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Action programs, objectives and vision.**



Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,  
Long term = beyond 5 years

The key strategies to deliver the RiverConnect mission to create a vibrant, more cohesive Greater Shepparton community through developing a strong sense of belonging and connection to our rivers and floodplains are summarised below:

### **Improved river access**

In order to connect to our rivers, the community must be able to access the area in ways that are compatible with their lifestyles. The shared path network will be expanded to create interlinked paths that connect the Mooroopna and Shepparton communities to the river. In addition, access to the river's edge will be upgraded in strategic locations across the area so that residents can visit the river in reasonable proximity to where they live and provision will be made for improved access for people with a disability. There will also be upgrades to boating facilities at three sites within the area and the development of the Kialla landfill site will provide a landmark southern gateway to the area.

### **Encouraging use of facilities:**

In conjunction with improving the physical access to the rivers and forests, there will be a coordinated program to encourage people to use these areas. This includes development of walking, cycling and canoeing tours for the area and the production of specially designed access maps to provide this information to the community. Shepparton already hosts a number of events and festivals and there will be strong push to incorporate activities based in or relating to the RiverConnect area in these events. Investigations will also be undertaken to examine the feasibility of new events, including a youth focussed music festival and a canoe "marathon" event.

### **Protecting and enhancing the environment**

The quality, diversity and sustainability of the natural environment in the RiverConnect area underpin its value to the community. These aspects will be protected and enhanced through a coordinated program of land use planning, and implementing agreed developments at key sites including Tassicker's (The Boulevard, Shepparton), Gemmill's Swamp and Reedy Swamp. Vehicle tracks will be rationalised and better managed to protect the area and there will be an ongoing program to control rubbish dumping in the forest and on the floodplain. The GB CMA's RiverConnect Waterway Health Action Plan will guide improvements to water quality, revegetation and control of pest plants and animals. Implementation of these activities will have a strong focus on providing opportunities for community participation and building in activities that allow the community to learn more about their local environment.

### **Connecting with Aboriginal culture**

There is a strong desire from many people in the community to better understand the rich and diverse legacy of Aboriginal history and culture unique to the region. The strategic plan sets out a range of activities intended to share this knowledge both within the Aboriginal community and with the wider community. Activities will include oral history sessions, schools activities, corroboree events and development of an historic trail in the Flats area and guided tours.

### **Educational activities**

The Greater Shepparton community has a strong desire to learn more about all aspects of the RiverConnect area. Knowledge will improve understanding and appreciation of the area and build our connection to the rivers and forest. RiverConnect already has a strong educational program that involves primary and secondary schools using the RiverConnect area as an outdoor classroom through the Adopt-a-r each program. This will be continued, progressively improved and expanded to include tertiary institutions. A major cultural and interpretive centre, situated on the banks of the river adjacent to the central business area would provide a strong focus for a wide range of cultural and educational activities covering water, environment, sustainable development and aboriginal culture. The plan proposes a detailed investigation of the feasibility and funding sources to develop such a centre, which would become a major asset and a hub for community based activity relating to the river. RiverConnect participation in a range of community events will also provide education opportunities for the community.

These actions are also supported by a consultation and communications strategy. Further details on the strategic Action Programs are provided in Section 7 of this plan.

## 6. Performance Indicators

In order to enable measurement of achievement against each objective, a number of key performance indicators (KPIs) have been developed and are listed in Table 1. These KPIs will be used to track performance of this strategic plan.

**Table 1: Key Performance Indicators for RiverConnect**

Performance aspect	Target
<b>Connecting Community</b>	
<p>Improved access to the RiverConnect area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved public access to the river</li> <li>Access path network extensions</li> <li>Interpretive signage improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium term* -100% of planned improvements</li> </ul>
<p>Increased community usage of the area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium term* - 50% increase in visits to the area, as measured through direct surveys of key access routes and interest points.</li> <li>Increase in the number of people who use the area as determined through survey of Greater Shepparton community (e.g. Council customer satisfaction surveys).</li> <li>- Target to be determined following baseline data collection</li> </ul>
<p>Increased use of the area for events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of new events or existing major events that incorporate a significant RiverConnect component</li> <li>Increased community participation in events with a RiverConnect element</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short term*</li> <li>Medium term*</li> <li>Short term*</li> </ul>
<b>Connecting Environment</b>	
<p>Reduced pollution reaching the river through storm water discharges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium term* Install 3 new gross pollutant traps on key storm water discharge points as identified in Waterway Health Action Plan.</li> <li>Reducing trend in amount of litter cleared from traps over time</li> </ul>

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,  
Long term = beyond 5 years

Improved water quality in rivers within the RiverConnect area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CMA water quality monitoring indicates a reduction in key pollutant inputs within the RiverConnect area</li> </ul>
Revegetation of RiverConnect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium term* - 90% of planned revegetation works completed.</li> </ul>
Improved health of existing vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium term* - Habitat scores for selected forest monitoring transects improvement.</li> <li>• The Index of Stream Condition score for Goulburn at Shepparton improves over time.</li> </ul>
Improved health of fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bird numbers and diversity increase at Reedy Swamp</li> <li>• Numbers of key species increase over time (e.g. squirrel glider)</li> </ul>
<b>Connecting Aboriginal People</b>	
Increased participation in activities with an Aboriginal component.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 300 people per year participate in activities with an Aboriginal component</li> <li>• Participant feedback shows 60% of attendees at activities improved their understanding of aboriginal history and culture issues.</li> </ul>
Improved knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal history and cultural issues in the RiverConnect area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community surveys show increased awareness and understanding of Aboriginal history and cultural issues (for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal segments of community).</li> </ul>
<b>Connecting Education</b>	
Effective participation by educational institutions in programs and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75% of schools in Shepparton and Mooroopna participate in RiverConnect activities each year.</li> <li>• 1000 student visits per year for RiverConnect related activities.</li> <li>• A collection of stories indicates increased student understanding.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication and Consultation</b>	
Improved awareness of RiverConnect programs and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 10 RiverConnect related stories per year published in the media.</li> <li>• Medium term* - RiverConnect website registers 3,000 visits per year</li> <li>• Short term*- RiverConnect eNewsletter has 250 subscribers.</li> <li>• Medium term* - At least 50% of the community are aware of the RiverConnect program.</li> </ul>

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,  
Long term = beyond 5 years

## 7. Action Programs

### Action Program: Connecting Community (CC)

#### Objective:

To provide access and facilities, together with activities and information to enable the community to value the river and its environment and visit and enjoy this area as an integral part of their lifestyle.

Connecting Community Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<p><b>Shared Path network enhancements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Northern Connection : from Mooroopna to Shepparton Weir area, incl. bridge over Goulburn R.</li> <li>(2) Southern Connection: Paths linking Mooroopna to Kialla landfill and connecting to Shepparton path network</li> <li>(3) Kidstown to Gemmill’s Swamp shared path</li> <li>(4) Gemmill’s to Reedy Swamp link – crossing Goulburn R adjacent to future G. V. Freeway bridge, linking to existing path network at Tassicker’s via path along river adjacent to Golf Club.</li> <li>(5) Design and construct access path network for the “Flats” area with appropriate interpretive signage to detail Aboriginal habitation on the Flats (see Connecting Aboriginal People Action Program for more details)</li> </ul>	<p>Effective connection of Mooroopna and Shepparton through access routes that encompass the RiverConnect area</p>	<p>GSCC/Parks Vic</p>	<p>Medium term*</p>
<p><b>Developing the Kialla Landfill Site</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(6) Prepare a development plan for the Kialla landfill site based on previous community consultation and RiverConnect inputs. Development should include interpretive</li> </ul>	<p>Landmark site converted into a significant community asset, providing a gateway to RiverConnect area</p>	<p>GSCC</p>	<p>Short term*</p>

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,

Long term = beyond 5 years

Connecting Community Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
information about the site and the wider RiverConnect area.	for residents south of the Broken		
<p><b>Improving River Access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(7) Upgrading of access to the river at the following key sites within the area, including supporting tracks, parking and signage infrastructure:</li> </ul> <p>Goulburn River (east side):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Shepparton Weir</li> <li>(B) Jordan's bend</li> <li>(C) Stuart's Reserve</li> <li>(D) Dainton's bridge</li> <li>(E) Tom Collins drive (canoe launch area)</li> <li>(F) Raftery Rd</li> </ul> <p>Goulburn River (west side):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(G) Jordan's bend (from Young's Reserve)</li> <li>(H) Dainton's Bridge</li> <li>(I) Flora &amp; Fauna Reserve (Flats) area</li> <li>(J) Kaielthaban Park, Archer St Mooroopna (boat ramp area)</li> </ul> <p>Broken River:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(K) Lincoln Drive</li> <li>(L) Archer St Shepparton</li> </ul>	Safe access to the river's edge available within reasonable distance of residential areas.		
<p><b>Improving Boat Access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(8) Installation/upgrading of boat launching facilities at preferred sites identified through consultation with user groups.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Raftery Rd</li> <li>(B) Pyke Rd (off Mooroopna-Murchison Rd)</li> <li>(C) Kaielthaban Park (Archer St Mooroopna)</li> </ul>	Safe, functional boat use facilities that protect the environment from damage	GB CMA /DPI	Short term*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(9) Signage to identify the existing boating speed restrictions on Goulburn R through RiverConnect area.</li> </ul>		DPI/MSV	Short term*

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,

Long term = beyond 5 years



Connecting Community Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (F) Bicycle tour routes and times</li> <li>○ (G) Walking tour routes and times</li> <li>○ (H) Canoeing tour routes and times</li> <li>○ (I) Driving tour routes and times</li> <li>• (13) Develop walking, cycling, canoeing and driving tours of the area               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) Self guided tours using access map and specially produced podcasts.</li> <li>○ (B) Guided tours on weekends and public holidays</li> <li>○ (C) Themed special activity tours (e.g. squirrel glider walks for observing nocturnal wildlife etc)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• (14) Encourage the attraction or establishment of a bike and/or canoe hire business.</li> <li>• (15) Improving access and usage for 'at risk' groups, including people from:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) low socio-economic circumstances,</li> <li>○ (B) culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds,</li> <li>○ (C) with a disability, the aged and children),</li> </ul>               utilising 'Go for Your Life- Active in Parks' program funding             </li> </ul>		<p>GSCC (with support from special interest groups)</p> <p>GSCC</p> <p>Parks Vic</p>	<p>Short term*</p> <p>Short term*</p> <p>Short Term*</p>
<p><b>Encouraging tourists to visit the Area</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (16) Engage with tourism groups to develop river/redgum tourism opportunities.</li> <li>• (17) Develop on-going links with tourism organisations to identify future opportunities for tourism linkages to RiverConnect.</li> </ul>	<p>Visitors to the region appreciate and enjoy the local environment.</p>	<p>GSCC</p> <p>GSCC</p>	<p>Short term*</p> <p>Short term*</p>

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,  
 Long term = beyond 5 years



Connecting Community Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (21) Stage an annual Murchison to Shepparton Canoe “Marathon” to highlight the river and forest environments               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Include strong public participation elements – canoe hire, corporate challenge section etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		GSCC/Canoe Club/Adventure Club/Water Week Committee	Short term*
<p><b>Organisational support for RiverConnect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (22) All RiverConnect partner organisations will include formal processes in their decision making and planning activities to ensure consistency and alignment with the RiverConnect vision and objectives, wherever possible</li> </ul>	Alignment with and support for achievement of RiverConnect objectives built into the way organisations work in the area	GSCC/GBCMA /Parks Vic	Short term*

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,  
Long term = beyond 5 years

## Action Program: Connecting Environment (CE)

### Objective:

To protect, repair, enhance and sustain important river, wetland and forest environments, so that current and future generations can understand and enjoy natural river and redgum forest environments.

Connecting Environment Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<b>(1) Clarify future roles, responsibilities, functions and consultative processes for activities within the proposed Shepparton Regional Park</b>	Clear roles for determining and implementing actions.	GSCC/Parks Victoria/GBC MA	Short term*
<b>(2) Agree on future development plan and responsibilities for:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) Tassicker's land,</li> <li>○ (B) All council owned land within the RiverConnect area ( and implement agreed actions)</li> </ul>	Valuable environment protected and made available for public use	GCSS/Parks Vic/ GB CMA	Short term*
<b>(3) Implement the actions identified in the Gemmill's Swamp master plan</b>	Improved access to and protection of valuable wetland environment.	Parks Vic/Friends of Gemmill's Swamp	Short term*
<b>(4) Implement high and medium priority actions from GB CMA's Waterway Health Action Plan</b>	High value environmental features protected and rehabilitated	Land Managers	Medium term*
<b>(5) Control and management of vehicle traffic including fencing and signage, rationalisation of track network and rehabilitation of damaged areas</b>	Protection of valuable features from traffic impacts	Land Managers	Short term*

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,

Long term = beyond 5 years

Connecting Environment Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<b>Cleaning up RiverConnect</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (6) Removal of rubbish from sites identified in GB CMA Waterway Health Action Plan</li> </ul>	Cleaner, more natural forest environments with fewer introduced species	Land Managers Working Group	Short term*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (7) Control pest plants and animals.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) Priorities for pest plant control will be based on areas and control recommendations identified in the WHAP and the Assessment of Crown Land Frontages in Urban Zones report.</li> <li>○ (B) Control programs will also be designed to take into account observations and reports of problem locations from school groups and community organisations working in the RiverConnect area.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		Parks Vic/GB CMA/GSCC  - with Schools, Urban Landcare groups, Field and Game, Sporting Shooters Assn. etc.	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (8) Hold annual community “Clean-up RiverConnect” event in conjunction with Clean-up Australia Day activities.</li> </ul>		GBCMA	Short term*
<b>Improving Water Quality</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (9) Implement high priority stormwater management actions from WHAP &amp; Greater Shepparton Stormwater Management Plan.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Install litter traps on stormwater outlets and maintain.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Improved water quality supporting healthy ecosystems	GSCC	Medium*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (10) Identify key bank erosion sites and undertake remedial works</li> </ul>		GB CMA	

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,  
 Long term = beyond 5 years

Connecting Environment Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (11) Build on and enhance public education programs on water quality in the Goulburn and Broken Rivers covering:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) Key factors influencing water quality (catchment wide)</li> <li>○ (B) How clean/dirty is the river? (with signage and monitoring updates in prominent locations)</li> <li>○ (C) The role of stormwater management</li> <li>○ (D) Actions underway to tackle problems</li> <li>○ (E) What can the community do to help?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		GVW WaterWatch /GSCC/GB CMA	Short term*
<p><b>Revegetating RiverConnect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (12) Rehabilitate and revegetate key river side areas including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) Lake Victoria and Tom Collins Drive</li> <li>○ (B) Shepparton Weir environs and access road</li> <li>○ (C) Goulburn River at Mooroopna upstream of Watt Rd bridge</li> <li>○ (D) Broken River adjacent to Broken River Drive.</li> <li>○ (E) Other revegetation works identified in WHAP</li> </ul> <p>Note: Parks Vic will also undertake thinning of redgums to provide for local community firewood needs in line with arrangements agreed as part of the creation of the Shepparton Regional Park.</p> </li> </ul>	Improved terrestrial environments, with higher aesthetic values	Land Managers/G B CMA  - with Schools and Urban Landcare groups	Medium term*
<p><b>Understanding flooding and floodplains</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (13) Develop a community education and information program about the role and importance of floodplains. Issues to be included:</li> </ul>	Improved community understanding of the environmental and flood management importance of floodplains	GB CMA	Short term*

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,

Long term = beyond 5 years



## Action Program: Connecting Aboriginal People (CA)

### Objective:

To provide programs, activities and facilities so that the whole community can understand and better appreciate the important historical and cultural significance this area holds for its traditional owners.

Connecting Aboriginal People Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<b>Understanding aboriginal history</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (1) Share the story of the Cummeragunja Walk-off and life on the Flats. Scope could include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) “Evenings with the Elders” program to share knowledge</li> <li>○ (B) Develop DVD of elders’ stories, building on existing PhD studies and video documentation.</li> <li>○ (C) A “day in the life” activity for schools to show young people what a typical day was like for an aboriginal child living on the Flats</li> </ul> </li> <li>• (2) Develop a historic trail around the Flats area:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) Hill 60 - Reinstate hill and hut with Photo display</li> <li>○ (B) Scale model of the Flats community</li> <li>○ (C) Recognition of families that lived on the Flats</li> <li>○ (D) Install path/trail around Flats to link to wider shared paths network</li> <li>○ (E) Provide interpretative signage at key points on trail.</li> <li>○ (F) Develop Fact sheets and podcasts for self guided tours</li> <li>○ (G) Extend trail/path to include other points of aboriginal history e.g. Flats, Daish’s, Sandhills area (McFarlane Rd)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• (3) Develop Guided Tours to highlight aboriginal community past and present:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) Flats, Daish’s Paddock, Aboriginal Football team, Mooroopna Cemetery</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities share a clear understanding of recent history in the Shepparton area</p>	<p>Yorta Yorta Nations (YYN) with support from GSCC/Parks Vic</p> <p>YYN (with support from GSCC/Parks Vic)</p> <p>YYN (with support from GSCC/Parks Vic)</p>	<p>Medium term*</p> <p>Medium term*</p> <p>Medium term*</p>

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,

Long term = beyond 5 years

Connecting Aboriginal People Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (B) Hear local language, traditional skills, tools</li> <li>○ (C) Different ages, eras</li> <li>○ (D) Involvement in agriculture, war effort</li> <li>○ (E) Rumbalara history – establishment, relocation, pioneer families</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Connecting with Aboriginal Culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● (4) Investigate potential for Yorta Yorta language studies in local schools</li> <li>● (5) Stage a Corroboree day event to showcase aboriginal dance, music and culture</li> <li>● (6) Develop educational material to build an understanding of traditional owners:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) Explanation of family structures in aboriginal society</li> <li>○ (B) Yorta Yorta tribal history</li> <li>○ (C) Explanation of various clan groups within Yorta Yorta nation</li> <li>○ (D) Description of traditional roles – Men’s business, Women’s business, shared issues</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Communities develop a better understanding of aboriginal culture</p>	<p>YYN (with support from GSCC)</p> <p>YYN (with support from GSCC)</p>	<p>Short term*</p> <p>Short term*</p> <p>Short term*</p>
<p><b>Aboriginal Community Involvements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● (7) Prepare information to highlight the contribution of the aboriginal community:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) History of activism and lobbying (e.g. Doug Nichols)</li> <li>○ (B) Displacement/reconnection with country</li> <li>○ (C) Leadership in reform and change for aboriginal community</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>A connected aboriginal community that celebrates its achievements.</p>	<p>YYN</p>	<p>Short term*</p>

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,  
 Long term = beyond 5 years

## Action Program: Connecting Education (CEdu)

### Objective:

To provide opportunities for the education sector and the broader community to understand the environment, culture and importance of the area as a valuable asset to appreciate, enjoy and protect.

Connecting Education Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<b>Improving Community education</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (1) Develop the RiverConnect Cultural and Interpretive Centre (RCIC) to highlight:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) Arts, history and environment – The European and Indigenous aspects of water in the RiverConnect area</li> <li>○ (B) Positively influence the Greater Shepparton Cultural Services Strategy to include these issues in planning for future facilities.</li> <li>○ (C) Identify suitable river/environmental location(s) for the RCEC</li> </ul> <p>Development of this proposal will also have regard for the GSCC Arts and Cultural Services Framework.</p> </li> <li>• (2) Develop European settlement history story and displays               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) Explore opportunities to present history through the RCIC.</li> <li>○ (B) Include historic information on interpretive signage located throughout the RiverConnect area and incorporate into self-guided tour maps etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• (3) Develop environmental and heritage awareness program to introduce new residents to the RiverConnect area.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) Include elements to introduce recent overseas arrivals to the local environmental values and issues.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Focus for the delivery of cultural and educational programs to communicate the RiverConnect story to the community</p>	<p>GSCC</p> <p>Feasibility study completed</p> <p>GSCC/ Historical Societies</p> <p>GSCC/Parks Vic/GBCMA</p>	<p>Long term*</p> <p>Short term*</p> <p>Medium term*</p> <p>Short term*</p>

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,  
Long term = beyond 5 years

Connecting Education Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(4) Education projects promoted through communications (newsletters, web site etc)</li> </ul>		GSCC (RC Project Officer)	Ongoing
<b>Improving Programs within schools</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(5) Develop opportunities for schools to participate in on-site river activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Continue the further development of the Adopt-a-Reach project including VCAL programs</li> <li>(B) Develop an orienteering course</li> <li>(C) Investigate new opportunities such as bug blitz program</li> <li>(D) Work with students to develop a RiverConnect song, musical and/or drama production.</li> </ul> </li> <li>(6) Develop curriculum materials that are relevant to schools and tertiary education needs, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) "What's out there?" kit</li> <li>(B) Information sheets on relevant sites e.g. fish ladder</li> <li>(C) Fact sheets about river and floodplain health and wetland ecology.</li> <li>(D) Maintain trailer of equipment and water cart</li> </ul> </li> <li>(7) Promote interschool contact               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Develop functionality and use of the RiverConnect website for sharing knowledge and ideas between schools.</li> <li>(B) Develop interschool activities, events, competitions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	School student population that understands and appreciates the value of the RiverConnect area	GSCC (RC Education coordinator and RiverConnect Field Officer)  GSCC (RC Education coordinator and RiverConnect Field Officer)  GSCC (RC Education coordinator)	Ongoing  Ongoing  Short term*  Ongoing  Ongoing
<b>Schools and community</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(8) Develop links between schools and community resources, including land managers and agency education officers:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) provide professional development to teachers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Effective partnerships between schools and the wider community that	GSCC (RC Education coord)	Short term*  Ongoing

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,

Long term = beyond 5 years

Connecting Education Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (B) promote use of existing resources</li> <li>○ (C) Where possible involve agency staff with school projects</li> <li>○ (D) ensure correct processes are developed and followed</li> <li>○ (E) explore new opportunities for educational programs to run in partnership with Kidstown</li> <li>● (9) Promote opportunities for the general community to participate in activities with schools:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) develop links between the local aboriginal community and schools</li> <li>○ (B) assist schools to develop community activities in their reach</li> <li>○ (C) encourage Landcare members to work with schools</li> <li>○ (D) explore opportunities for other groups to work with schools e.g. Field and game, U3A etc.</li> <li>○ (E) Seek community sponsorship for each reach</li> </ul> </li> <li>● (10) Promote opportunities for schools to participate in community projects               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (A) Encourage school involvement in Land Management projects</li> <li>○ (B) Encourage schools to participate in community activities such as WaterWatch's Water week program, Twilight walks, Kidsfest.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>help more people engage with the rivers and forests.</p>	<p>GSCC (RC Education coord.)</p> <p>GSCC (RC Project Officer and RC Education coord.) PV/GBCMA</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Short term*</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Short term*</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p><b>Tertiary education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● (11) Promote RiverConnect in Shepparton –Mooroopna tertiary education programs:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maintain existing relationships with GOTAFE and explore possibilities of developing new initiatives with the other local Tertiary institutes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Tertiary student resources engaged to expand research and knowledge generation activities relevant to RiverConnect issues.</p>	<p>GSCC (RC Education coord.)</p>	<p>Short term*</p>

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,  
Long term = beyond 5 years

## Action Program: Communication & Consultation (Comms)

### Objective:

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

Communication & Consultation Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<p><b>Provide regular, reliable information to community on RiverConnect activities and progress:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) RiverConnect eNewsletter</li> <li>(2) Develop RiverConnect Website, with online capability to allow people to subscribe to information feeds, volunteer to participate in activities, book for events etc.</li> <li>(3) Review RiverConnect marketing and branding program.</li> <li>(4) Investigate other options to keep community informed about RiverConnect actions, including Twitter &amp; Facebook.</li> <li>(5) Ensure information produced communicates and celebrates RiverConnect achievements and highlights, as well as providing information on upcoming activities.</li> </ul>	Supportive, well informed community that is aware of opportunities to use and enjoy the area.	GSCC/RiverConnect Project Officer	Short term*
<p><b>(6) Establish a RiverConnect Ambassadors program.</b></p>	Provides a public face to community involvement and activities.	GSCC	Short term*
<p><b>(7) Develop RiverConnect tourism marketing plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(A) Plan to support and complement existing tourism initiatives in place</li> <li>(B) Will also link to and support action under connecting community program to develop river/redgum tourism opportunities.</li> </ul>	Visitors to the region will be able to enjoy the area as well as local community	GSCC	Short term*

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,

Long term = beyond 5 years

Communication & Consultation Actions	Target Outcome	Lead Agency	Timeframe
<b>(8) Develop a RiverConnect merchandise strategy</b>			Short term*
<b>Develop active partnerships with key media to inform community of RiverConnect activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (9) Print Media</li> <li>• (10) Radio</li> <li>• (11) TV</li> </ul>	Informed community through regular information flow.		Short term*
<b>(12) Produce kit for new home owners with information of RiverConnect opportunities and responsible environmental actions, legal requirements etc.</b>	Responsible communities that are aware of the advantages and obligations of living near the RiverConnect area.		Short term*

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,  
 Long term = beyond 5 years

## 8. Implementation plan

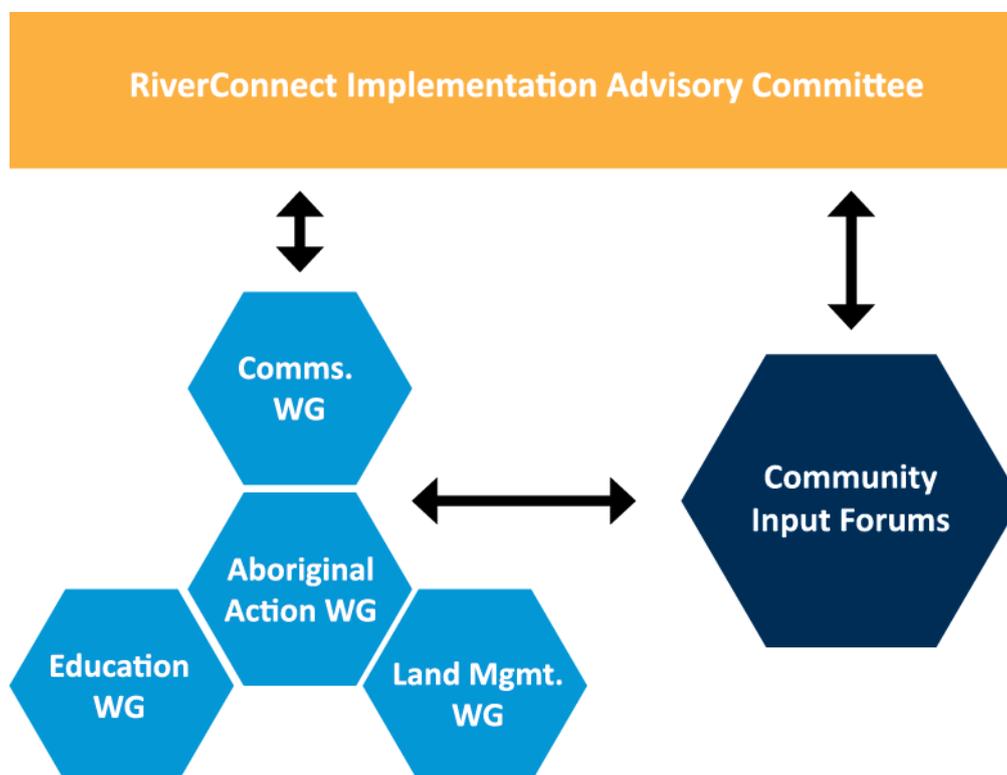
### 8.1. Governance Arrangements

In order to bring all the parties together to work towards a co-ordinated plan for the revitalisation of our rivers, the RiverConnect project developed clear governance arrangements to ensure that all the key stakeholders involved were represented and had access to appropriate forums to bring forward their issues for consideration. The current structure has worked very effectively throughout the planning process. Some of the key strengths are:

- Members of the CAC from key stakeholders in GSCC and GB CMA in particular have been Directors/Mayor and senior officers. This has lifted the profile of the project within those key organisations and provided representatives who can commit their organisation to action.
- The working group structure has been effective, and has provided a forum to co-ordinate actions on the ground and to ensure consistent approaches from all stakeholders. This sharing of information, skills and the alignment of actions between organisations involved is a significant benefit already flowing from the RiverConnect project.

Building on the strengths of the current governance arrangements is seen as highly desirable, so a similar structure is proposed to govern and manage the implementation phase of the RiverConnect program (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Proposed implementation governance structure



Implementation of agreed actions will be managed directly by the nominated lead organisation. The key functions to be undertaken during implementation will include:

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

Short Term = 0-3yrs, Medium term = 4-5 yrs,  
Long term = beyond 5 years

Key features of this structure include:

- River Connect Implementation Advisory Committee (RCIAC):
  - This will be a high level, strategic forum responsible for providing advice to GSCC and partner organisations.
  - Oversight of the first five functions from the list above.
  - Members to be drawn from the same organisations as are currently represented in the RiverConnect CAC. i.e.:
    - Greater Shepparton City Council (2)
    - Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (2)
    - Yorta Yorta Joint Body
    - Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporation
    - Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative
    - Parks Victoria
    - Department of Primary Industries
    - Goulburn Murray Landcare Network
    - Word and Mouth Board
    - Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Central Sub Region
    - Community representatives (3)
  - As the project moves from planning (and commitment of resources) to implementation of agreed strategies and actions, there is still a need for Councillor/CMA Director participation on the Implementation Committee to ensure strong organisational commitment to and alignment with RiverConnect objectives. These councillor/Director representatives should also be supplemented by staff from their respective organisations. The RCIAC members should be senior staff from partner organisations with responsibilities for implementation of agreed actions.
  - The Implementation Advisory Committee will be responsible for regular community input forums designed to inform the community on progress and receive input to guide further implementation activities.
  - As the name suggests, the Implementation Advisory Committee will be an advisory committee to GSCC. If possible, the Implementation Advisory Committee should also be designed to meet any requirements for a community advisory committee to advise Parks Victoria in relation to the Regional Park areas. If this could be agreed on and achieved this would provide a powerful tool for linking and co-ordinating actions both within and around the Regional Park.

- It is proposed that the Implementation Advisory Committee will be required to provide formal quarterly progress reports to GSCC, GB CMA and Parks Victoria.
- Working Groups:
  - The Working Groups are the key groups where the skills and expertise of the partner organisations and the community can be brought together to address the detail needed to effectively develop and implement the actions identified in the Strategic plan.
  - Working Groups will be responsible for developing the detailed plans and priorities for implementation activities, identifying opportunities to modify or improve the Plan and making appropriate recommendations to the Implementation Committee on these issues.
  - Working Groups will ensure the co-ordination of actions between the partners, and will provide the expertise and resources to support the Implementation Committee in fulfilling its functions.
  - Working Groups will also identify where additional targeted consultation may be necessary to support implementation activities.
  - The Working Groups will be interest/skills based and will work across all programs in the Strategic plan, however the Working groups will have primary responsibility for Strategic plan programs as set out below:
 

- Connecting Community Program	Land Management WG
- Connecting Environment Program	Land Management WG
- Connecting Education Program	Education WG
- Connection Aboriginal People	Aboriginal Action WG
- Communication and Consultation Program	Communications WG
  - It is proposed that the current Aboriginal Participation Working Group and the Elders Reference Group be replaced by a single Aboriginal Action Working Group, which would include representatives of the Elders and would also be responsible for targeted consultation and information programs with various aboriginal community groups as required.
  - At least one member of the RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee will be on each working group. Wherever possible, working groups should be convened by a member of the RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee. This will help provide a strong linkage and improve co-ordination between the Implementation Advisory Committee and Working Groups.

- All working groups will seek advice from the Aboriginal Action Working Group on any issues that have potential Aboriginal sensitivities or that could have improved outcomes with Aboriginal contributions.
- Community Input Forums:  
In recognition of the strong interest in RiverConnect from many organisations and individuals who may not be represented in the Implementation Advisory Committee or Working Groups, these forums will be held annually across the Shepparton and Mooroopna area. They will be designed and facilitated to provide regular progress reporting to the community on implementation and to provide an opportunity for ongoing community input to the implementation and further development of the Strategic plan. These forums will also be supplemented with specific community consultation on key projects as they are developed.

The implementation structures and the expectations and obligations of partner organisations will be clearly documented. A public process for partner organisations and IAC/WG members to “sign-on” to these arrangements will provide a strong legitimacy for the role and operation of the governance arrangements. Key functions and suggested representation for Working Groups are attached in Appendix 1.

## 8.2. Implementation program and funding

This strategic plan establishes the overall objectives and strategies that will be implemented in order to achieve the objectives and vision for RiverConnect. Much is already happening in the area, but it is not fully integrated and being undertaken as part of a long term change plan. Whilst this plan contains a range of proposed actions, the focus is not on significantly increasing expenditure by the existing partners, it is about redirecting and re-prioritising existing funding and resources to achieve improved outcomes and attracting external funding.

Implementation activities will be undertaken and managed by the nominated lead agency, however co-ordination and oversight will be provided through the implementation governance arrangements outlined in Section 8.1. Funding levels for implementation actions will be determined by each organisation and many of the actions will be suitable targets for external funding from State and Federal government sources or philanthropic organisations. A number of the actions identified in the plan will only proceed if this external funding is available.

Each organisation will prepare their own individual budgets for RiverConnect activities and levels of activity will be dependent on overall availability of funding in each organisation. It is proposed that the RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee should be provided with information on the actions relating to RiverConnect proposed by each of the partner organisations, on an annual basis. This will allow the total spread of activity and funding across all partners to be better understood, and will enable essential co-ordination of complimentary activities across the total plan area.

A key input to implementation of the plan will be project staff to directly undertake some actions and to co-ordinate and manage the implementation activities across the partner organisations. There are currently a number of project staff spending at least some of their time on RiverConnect activities. In order to support the increased level of activity that is required for implementation, some increase in project staff is suggested. The following table provides details of existing and suggested future staffing levels.

Description	Current staffing (Full time equivalents)	Suggested Staffing (Full time equivalents)
<b>Project officer:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to committees and working groups</li> <li>• Program and budget co-ordination</li> <li>• Monitoring and reporting</li> </ul>	1	1
<b>Field officer:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field activities, especially for educational activities and revegetation.</li> </ul>	0.4	0.6
<b>Educational co-ordinator (contractor)</b>	0.2	0.2

The Goulburn Broken CMA currently contributes \$80,000/year towards these resources and other project costs. The balance is funded by GSCC. It is proposed that the GBCMA contribution should continue at the same level in real terms, and GSCC consider funding the balance of the proposed staffing resources for implementation. Staffing needs should be reviewed in light of the final agreed plan and detailed implementation planning and workload assessment.

## 9. Monitoring and assessment program

In order to gauge the effectiveness of this plan and to enable it to be adapted to changing needs and circumstances, it is important that a suitable monitoring and assessment program be designed and implemented to support the plan. This will be a priority task for the Implementation Advisory Committee to oversee, once the final plan is adopted.

The performance targets identified in Section 6 have been selected to use existing data sources wherever possible. This provides the maximum possible data record to assess trends in performance over time against and also minimises the cost of collecting additional data.

Some new data collection will be required, particularly in relation to assessing levels of visitation to key points of interest within the area, but in many cases slight modification of, or expansions to existing councils customer satisfaction surveys will provide information on community attitudes and awareness of RiverConnect at quite low costs.

A key theme in relation to monitoring and assessment is that data on participation in activities linked to the RiverConnect area is a strong indicator of the community's connection to the area. Collection of data on numbers of participants for activities relating to RiverConnect is a simple yet effective measurement technique, which will be undertaken whenever possible. Wherever appropriate, this data will also be coupled with information gathered from simple participant feedback surveys to identify strengths and weaknesses of various activities, and to inform continuous improvement of the RiverConnect programs.

The environmental targets have largely been designed to utilise existing data sources, with the exception of habitat scores to gauge forest health along selected transects. These studies are currently not undertaken in this area, but it is expected that Parks Victoria, possibly in association with the CMA, will undertake this type of assessment (or something similar) as part of the new management arrangements for the Shepparton Regional Park and the Lower Goulburn National Park. It would also be desirable to monitor other environmental measures (e.g. bird numbers) more widely across the area. It is proposed that environmental monitoring needs and costs will be reviewed in detail during the first year of implementation. Details of all specific performance measures and targets will also be further developed and refined in the first year of plan implementation.

In order to monitor implementation progress and support ongoing investment, it is essential that effective annual reporting of implementation activities and achievement against key performance indicators is prepared and published. This reporting should be overseen by the RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee. It will provide a total picture of activity by all partners relating to RiverConnect and will provide important public accountability about progress of the strategy.

## 10. Review and adaptation processes

This strategic plan sets out the mission and vision for RiverConnect, and the key objectives and the actions required to achieve these outcomes over time, based on the information and knowledge available.

It is not a “blueprint” with every future action fully detailed. Many of the actions will require further investigation to determine their detailed design and feasibility, and the implementation process will include structured, prioritised investigations to develop the necessary detail as funds become available for implementation. There is little value in developing detailed designs or plans for a project that may not be undertaken for five years, as much of this work would have to be repeated to reflect changes over that period.

An essential part of the implementation process will be targeted community consultation which will be regularly undertaken as part of the development of detailed proposals for specific RiverConnect projects and activities. Because the environment underpins much of the intrinsic value of the area, it is also essential that it be protected and enhanced. To this end, it is proposed that all RiverConnect activities will be subject to an Environmental Risk Assessment to ensure that there are no inadvertent negative impacts associated with the enhanced community utilisation of the area.

This will be an adaptive strategy that learns by doing. Monitoring of performance and gathering community feedback will allow the plan to be modified to better achieve its objectives and to continue to meet the needs of the community as they change over time. It is expected that on an annual basis, the Implementation Advisory Committee will review priorities and adjust the actions planned.

It is also proposed that after three years of implementation, the RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee should undertake a formal review of the plan to confirm that the objectives are still appropriate (or what modification may be needed) and to review the strategies and actions required to achieve those objectives, having regard for experience over the first three years of implementation.

## Appendix 1 – Working Groups

The key functions and suggested representation for each working group is set out in this Appendix. Detailed terms of reference and membership for each working group will be developed and endorsed by the RiverConnect Implementation Advisory Committee as part of the plan implementation phase. It is proposed that the Implementation Advisory Committee and Working Groups should operate using a consensus decision making model, and minimise “procedural” actions and documentation. The focus will be on recording key decisions and advice in a manner that facilitates action.

### **Aboriginal Action Working Group:**

1. Function:

To advise on programs, activities and facilities that will enable the whole community to understand and better appreciate aboriginal history historical and culture in the RiverConnect area.

The Aboriginal Action Working Group will also be a source of advice, review and guidance to all other working groups in relation to any issues that have potential Aboriginal sensitivities or that could have improved outcomes with Aboriginal contributions.

2. Membership:

- Yorta Yorta Nations
- Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative
- Aboriginal Community Strategic Planning and Policy Unit
- Yorta Yorta Joint Body
- Goulburn Broken CMA
- Greater Shepparton City Council
- Parks Victoria
- Community:
  - Elders representatives
  - Aboriginal community representatives
  - General Community representatives

### **Land Management Working Group:**

1. Function:

To provide expert advice on public land management issues within the RiverConnect area, share programs and activities relating to land management and to co-ordinate land management activities between key partners(including community groups) to help achieve the RiverConnect vision and objectives.

The Land Management Working Group will also be a source of advice, review and guidance to other working groups in relation to environmental management of proposed programs and activities.

## 2. Membership:

- Parks Victoria
- Goulburn Broken CMA
- Shepparton/Mooroopna Urban Landcare Group
- Yorta Yorta Nations
- Goulburn Valley Environmental Group
- Greater Shepparton City Council
  - RiverConnect project officer
  - RiverConnect field officer
  - Sustainability and Environment section
  - Local Laws officer
  - Asset Development group

### **Education Working Group:**

#### 1. Function:

To develop and co-ordinate educational programs and activities to enable the community to understand the environment, culture and importance of the area.

The Education Working Group will also be a source of advice, review and guidance to other working groups in relation to educational components of proposed programs and activities.

#### 2. Membership:

- Aboriginal Action WG representative
- Goulburn Valley Water - WaterWatch
- DPI LandLearn
- Goulburn Murray Landcare Network
- Greater Shepparton City Council
- Education sector:
  - Primary schools staff representative
  - Secondary schools staff representative
  - Tertiary Institutions staff representative
- Community
  - Word and Mouth
  - Community representatives

### **Communications Working Group:**

1. Function:

To develop and communications, awareness and marketing programs and activities to enable the community to understand the environment, culture and importance of the area and to co-ordinate communications activities between key partners(including community groups) to help achieve the RiverConnect vision and objectives.

The Communications Working Group will also be a source of advice, review and guidance to other working groups in relation to communications and marketing components of proposed programs and activities.

2. Membership:

- Goulburn Broken CMA
- Greater Shepparton City Council
- Parks Victoria
- Tourism interest representative
- Local Media
- Community representatives
- Aboriginal Action Working Group representative