



## GEORGES RIVERKEEPER – RIVER HEALTH PROGRAM REPORT Updated: 5 February, 2018\*

### 2017-18 Financial Year (Year to Date) Summary

#### River Health Monitoring (tributaries, main channel and estuary):

- The 2016 - 17 River Health Report Card has been distributed to councils, libraries and community centres across the Georges River catchment. The accompanying Technical Report provides a more detailed description of waterway monitoring results and was distributed to officers from each member council.
- External contractors have been engaged for development of the Rapid Visual Assessment methodology over 2017 - 18. *The River Health Coordinator and Catchment Actions Coordinator have been working on preliminary development of weed, litter and liveability metrics for inclusion in the assessments. The River Health Cluster will soon be asked to advise on the development of appropriate metrics to assess waterways and inform management decisions.*
- Spring surveys of freshwater sites were completed, with the assistance of a contractor. *The macroinvertebrate communities collected during those surveys have been identified. Monthly estuarine surveys are ongoing, from October to March.*
- *The River Health Coordinator participated in a discussion of Past, Present and Future Waterway Monitoring at Bayside Council.*

#### School & Community Engagement:

- School engagement activities that facilitate interacting with large groups have been trialled:
  - 110 students from St Johns Park High School at Orphan School Creek on 21 August.
  - 140 students from Sans Souci Public School at Claydon Reserve on 7 September.
- Georges Riverkeeper partnered with Hurstville Museum (Georges River Council) to deliver a school holiday program 'A Bug's Life' to 26 children (4 – 9 yr olds) on 5 October. The program enabled River Health to educate a young audience about caring for their local waterways and can now be adapted for use across the Georges Riverkeeper member councils. *The partnership will continue, with future programs planned for the April and July school holidays.*
- *The River Health Coordinator partnered with Campbelltown City Council to assist with the development of educational activities at Simmos Beach on 29 November.*
- The River Health Coordinator participated in a Depth Studies course at Penrith Environmental Education Centre on 30 October.
- *The River Health Coordinator is developing educational activities with De La Salle College, Revesby (Canterbury-Bankstown LGA) and James Cooks Technology Boys Highschool (Georges River LGA), to be used in 2018.*
- The River Health Coordinator attended the Oatley Lions Festival on 21 October.
- The River Health Coordinator spoke about the program to 101 retirees from the Dolan Bay Probus Club on 23 October.
- Community members assisted with River Health monitoring at sites in the Dharawal National Park and Georges River LGA in November.

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\* Activities that have been complete since the last River Health Program Report or are ongoing are shown in italics.

## Partnerships

- The River Health Coordinator is a member of the National Report Card Network and participated in a teleconference in July. That network is coordinated by the Fitzroy Partnership for River Health and a growing numbers of organisations are using Report Cards similar to those produced by Georges Riverkeeper to communicate waterway condition to a broad audience. Members of the network have provided valuable information about strategies for increasing the reach of Report Cards to encourage behavioural changes of benefit to waterways.
- In August, the River Health Coordinator met with academics from University of New England, who coordinate the Ecohealth Program. Ecohealth is a similar program to River Health and covers the coastal catchments of northern NSW (i.e. from Port Macquarie to the Queensland border). The academics had useful information about how River Health may align current monitoring with local universities to develop mutually beneficial partnerships.
- In August, Georges Riverkeeper met with the Cooks River Alliance, Parramatta River Catchment Group and Sydney Coastal Catchments Group to strengthen partnerships and discussed future programs on which they may collaborate. The Get the Site Right campaign in November was a joint initiative of those groups.
- Georges Riverkeeper is a member of the SPLASH Steering Committee, assisting the group to work towards their vision of 'a water sensitive New South Wales where no community is left behind'. Meetings were held in August, October and December: attended by representatives from Metropolitan Water Directorate, WaterNSW, Sydney Water, Hunter Water, Central West Alliance, Cooks River Alliance, Parramatta River Catchment Group, Sydney Coastal Catchments Group and Blacktown Council. SPLASH is also aligned with the CRC for Water Sensitive Cities. Membership in the group allows Georges Riverkeeper to contribute to the strategic direction of SPLASH and provides a conduit of information about water management across multiple levels of government in NSW.
- The River Health Coordinator is a member of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Environmental Educators Network (WSEEN). *In December, the River Health Coordinator gave a presentation about the compilation and development of urban waterway education materials.* River Health has also established networks with environmental educators across Sydney through: membership of the United Nations endorsed Greater Western Sydney Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (GWS-RCE); Sydney Environmental Educators (SEED); and, partnerships with supporters of Streamwatch.
- The River Health Coordinator spent a day in the field with John Gooderham (author of 'The Waterbug Book') and Cecil Ellis (from Streamwatch) in October to discuss the National Waterbug Blitz, which is a project with federal funding over the next three years that aims to involve citizen scientists in collecting waterbug data across Australia.
- The River Health Coordinator continues to contribute information to inform development of the Georges River Environmental Improvement Plan by South 32, for Appin Mine discharges. That is a partnership with the mining company, EPA and Western Sydney University (Ian Wright), with the most recent meeting on 13 September. At the last meeting, the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage indicated that they also have valuable information and may join the partnership.
- *The River Health Coordinator met with staff from ANSTO to discuss the environmental management plan of their land at Lucas Heights in November. Future collaboration on research was also discussed.*
- *In 2018, the River Health Coordinator will co-supervise a student from Western Sydney University, who is working on a project to identify 'How Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities use and engage with their local creek'.*

### **Scientific communication:**

- *The River Health Coordinator is the primary author of a manuscript comparing the macroinvertebrate communities in engineered and non-engineered urban streams, to be published by a scientific journal. That work was presented at the Australian Society of Limnologists Conference, Sydney, September.*
- *The River Health Coordinator presented a talk about Georges Riverkeeper programs in relation to stormwater at the Stormwater NSW Forum on the 23 November. That Forum provided an opportunity to meet diverse groups with a stake in stormwater issues.*
- *The River Health Coordinator has written an abstract for submission to the 9<sup>th</sup> Australian Stream Management Conference. The conference will be held in Hobart in August. The title of the abstract is: 'Using concreted stormwater channels for determining 'worse case scenarios' when assigning grades of relative condition to urban waterways'.*
- *The River Health Coordinator has begun working on a review of published literature relating to the ecology and water quality of the Georges River.*

### **Other**

- *The River Health Coordinator completed the online Engaging Communities Course through Macquarie University. Materials provided through the course were comprehensive and informative, covering the steps required for effective community engagement.*
- *The River Health Coordinator attended 'Last chance for western Sydney bushland?' facilitated by the Total Environment Centre, AdaptNSW Annual Forum facilitated by the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage and Research and Management of Urban Ecosystems facilitated by the Sydney Institute of Marine Sciences.*
- *The River Health Coordinator is working with Western Sydney University on the development of a student internship program that will strengthen the relationship with the university and identify students with a particular aptitude for fieldwork to assist with future River Health data collection.*