



Georges Riverkeeper

ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

GEORGES RIVERKEEPER EXECUTIVE GROUP REPORT



Councillor Stephen Nikolovski
(Sutherland Shire Council)
Georges Riverkeeper Chairperson
Jul. 2024 – Jun. 2025



Councillor David Walsh
(City of Canterbury Bankstown)
Georges Riverkeeper Vice Chairperson Feb. 2025 – Jun. 2025
Georges Riverkeeper 2nd Vice Chairperson Jul. 2024 – Feb 2025



Leanne Niblock
(Sydney Water)
Georges Riverkeeper 2nd Vice Chairperson
Feb. 2025 – Jun. 2025



Councillor Matthew Allison
(Georges River Council)
Georges Riverkeeper Treasurer
Feb. 2025 – Jun. 2025



Councillor Peter Mahoney
(Georges River Council)
Georges Riverkeeper Treasurer
Jul. 2024 – Feb. 2025



Narelle (Nell) Graham
Georges Riverkeeper Program Manager
Jan. 2025 – Jun. 2025



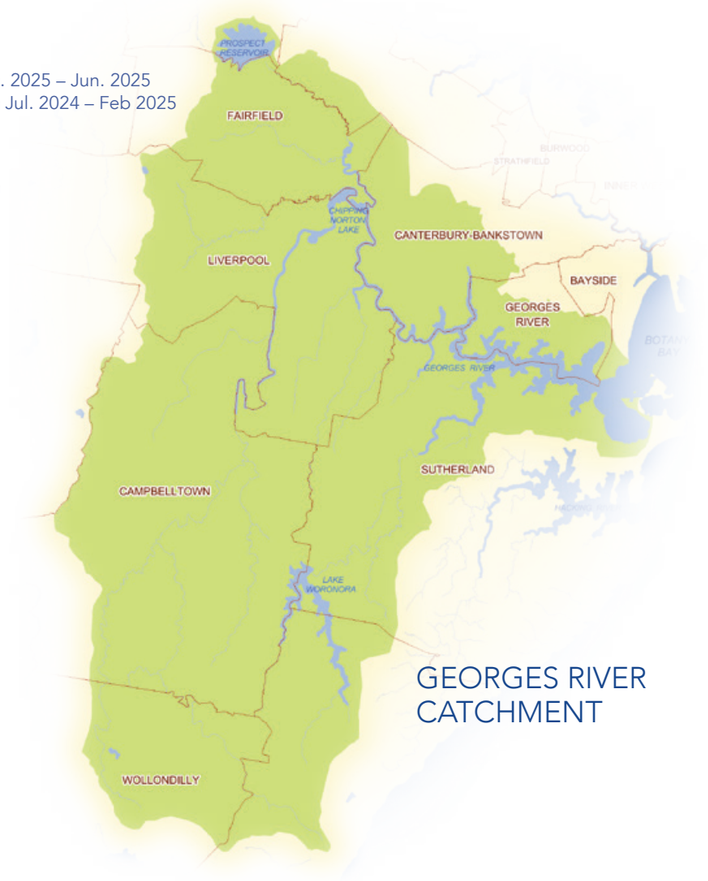
Kirsten Spry
Georges Riverkeeper Program Manager
Jul. 2024 – Feb. 2025



Michael Zengovski
(Liverpool City Council)
Georges Riverkeeper Host Manager
Oct. 2024 – Jun. 2025



Jordan Widenstrom
(Sutherland Shire Council)
Georges Riverkeeper Host Manager
Jul. 2024 – Sept. 2024



GEORGES RIVER CATCHMENT

Georges Riverkeeper is the business name of the Georges River Combined Councils' Committee Incorporated (GRCCC). In 2024/25, Member Councils included Bayside, Campbelltown, City of Canterbury Bankstown, Fairfield, Georges River, Liverpool, and Sutherland Shire, with Wollondilly Shire Council a member until December 2024. Sydney Water is our valued Financial Partner. Together, we work to protect and enhance the environmental health and liveability of the Georges River and its catchment.

Following the September 2024 local government elections and caretaker period, Member Councils nominated new representatives. The Annual General Meeting was held in February 2025, with Office Bearers elected and a refreshed Committee and Executive Group established.

This year also marked a transition in hosting arrangements. We sincerely thank Sutherland Shire Council for hosting Georges Riverkeeper from 2020 to 2024 and warmly welcome Liverpool City Council as our new Host.

Another milestone was registration as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, providing income tax exemption and other concessions.

Chairperson Cr Nikolovski congratulates staff for securing major grants, the Federal Urban Rivers and Catchments Grant and the NSW Coastal and Estuary Grant, and acknowledges the leadership of Kirsten Spry before Nell Graham joined the team, and the diligence and dedication of Lydia Smithers and Rob Dixon during this transitional year.

GEORGES RIVERKEEPER PROGRAM MANAGER'S REPORT



Kirsten Spry
Georges Riverkeeper
Acting Program Manager
Jul. 2024 – Feb. 2025



Narelle (Nell) Graham
Georges Riverkeeper Program Manager
Jan. 2025 – Jun. 2025

The 2024/25 financial year was one of significant transition and renewal for Georges Riverkeeper. A major milestone was the conclusion of our hosting arrangement with Sutherland Shire Council, which had supported our operations since 2020. We extend our sincere thanks to their Councillors and staff for four years of partnership.

In October 2024, our move to Liverpool City Council as new Host was finalised, following months of planning and coordination. This transition involved the transfer of staff, systems, finances, records, and operational assets. The support of Liverpool City Council's Environment, Finance, HR, and IT teams has been invaluable in embedding our operations into the new host environment.

Staff changes also shaped the year. Two temporary Catchment Officers supported the organisation while we transitioned between Host Councils. We welcomed new Program Manager Nell Graham in late-January 2025, bringing strong experience in environmental program delivery and integrated water management. And, after farewelling Rob Dixon in April following more than five years of service, we welcomed Phuong To, Environmental Project Officer Water Quality, in May and Felipe Moretto, Catchment Project Officer in June.

The Riverkeeper Centre remains a key base for our work. This year, the Licence of Occupation was renewed for a further five years, with the option of an additional five-year extension, thanks to ongoing support from NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

These structural changes and staff appointments have strengthened our capacity to deliver programs and expand our impact across the catchment. With refreshed leadership, a secure operational base, and strong Host Council support, we are well-positioned to continue advancing our mission to protect and improve the Georges River.

CHANGE FOR THE RIVER

Through the NSW Return and Earn scheme, you can now donate your 10c container refunds directly to Georges Riverkeeper to help restore and protect the river. Your support funds litter clean-ups, bush regeneration, water quality monitoring, and community education. Every 10c makes a difference. To donate, download the Return and Earn app, select Georges Riverkeeper – Change for the River as your preferred payout/charity, and return your containers as usual. Donations can only be made via the app, not at the machine. People often ask how they can help; this is a simple and powerful action.

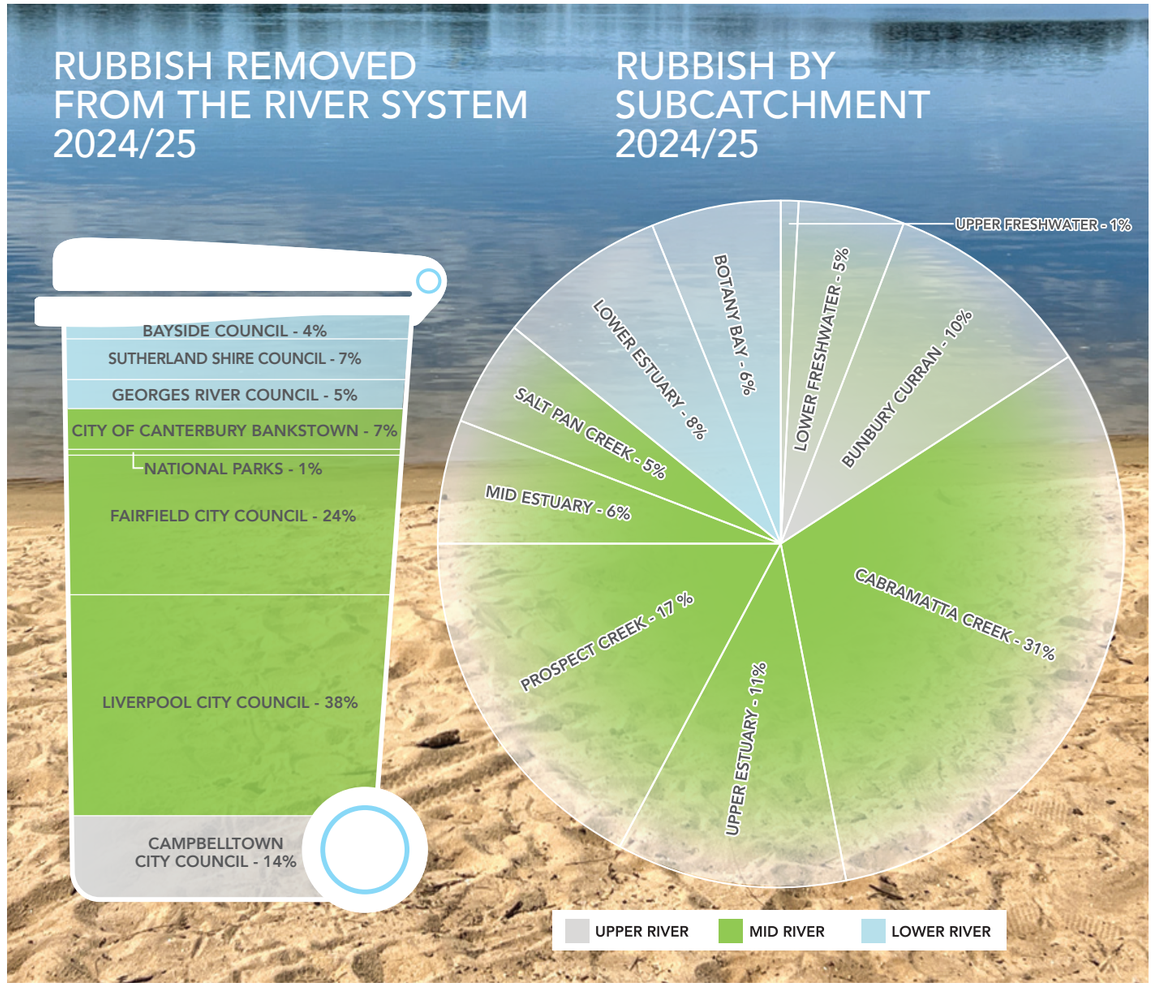


CATCHMENT ACTIONS PROGRAM
LITTER & BIODIVERSITY

LITTER REMOVAL

Georges Riverkeeper coordinated extensive litter removal across the catchment. Through our partnership with Corrective Services NSW, teams worked weekly at 280 approved sites, expanding to include new locations in Fairfield and Campbelltown Local Government Areas (LGA). This financial year, the program contributed over 18,308 clean up hours and removed approximately 110,521 kg of litter, more than 7,000 large bags, from foreshores, creeks, and industrial areas.

Discarded plastics and other waste can entangle wildlife, introduce toxins into the food chain, and smother sensitive aquatic habitats. Our work not only removes these pollutants but also prevents further environmental harm. We also supported community clean-ups by collecting rubbish gathered by local volunteers, inspected illegal dumping sites, and addressed hotspot areas including Salt Pan Creek and Satyam Ghat, helping to restore healthier, safer waterways for people and nature.



CATCHMENT ACTIONS PROGRAM
LITTER & BIODIVERSITY

LITTER PREVENTION

In 2024/25, Georges Riverkeeper advanced litter prevention efforts with the development of a Litter Prevention Roadmap, funded through a $42,000 NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) grant under the NSW Government's Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy which was delivered in partnership with six Member Councils. The Roadmap builds on previous strategic work and will guide targeted initiatives to reduce litter entering waterways over the next five years. We worked with councils to secure formal endorsement of the strategy.
A litter prevention boat tour for the Committee was undertaken to highlight how much litter is costing councils, pinpoint problem areas and discuss solutions. We also assisted with NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and NSW EPA statewide litter monitoring at Blakehurst and piloted the use of wildlife cameras with Georges River Council to monitor litter levels in waterways.



BIODIVERSITY

Bush regeneration programs have remained a focus, with Corrective Services NSW offenders working fortnightly at eight sites for Fairfield City Council and a newly established site for Liverpool City Council. These projects target the removal of invasive weeds, allowing native vegetation to re-establish and strengthening habitat for local wildlife.

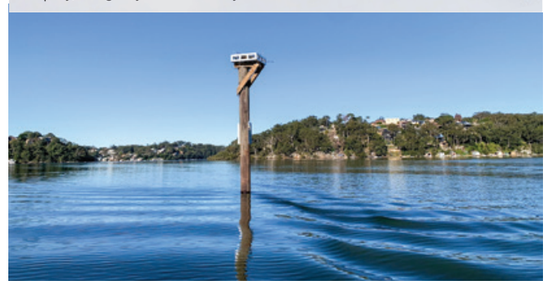
Using our boat, we facilitated our Member Councils' development compliance and priority weed inspections of the foreshores, creeks and rivers across the catchment, helping protect aquatic environments and riparian corridors.

Major highlights this year included the successful installation of a custom-built Osprey nesting platform at Lime Kiln Bay, Lugarno, in partnership with Georges River Council and with support from Crown Lands and Maritime Services, providing a safe, permanent breeding site for a vulnerable osprey pair that had previously nested on a construction crane. $899,190 in grant funding was also secured from the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust under the Urban Rivers and Catchments Program to undertake large-scale riparian restoration across Liverpool, Georges River, Fairfield, and Bayside LGAs. Actions at the four project sites over the three-year project include extensive weed removal, Indigenous-led cultural burns, including fencing for protection, and habitat revegetation.

Shorebird conservation efforts continued via bimonthly monitoring with the Australian Waders Studies Group and National Parks and Wildlife Service across Sutherland Shire, Bayside and Towra Point. Collectively, these initiatives are restoring ecological function, enhancing biodiversity resilience, and offering our catchment's fauna renewed opportunities to thrive in a healthier landscape.



Osprey, image by Rob Annesley



RIVER HEALTH & RESEARCH PROGRAM

Our River Health & Research Program continues to deliver vital, evidence-based insights into the ecological condition of the Georges River. Using a scientifically rigorous framework that assesses riparian vegetation, water quality, and macroinvertebrate populations, the program evaluates both freshwater creeks and the estuary. Field teams completed sampling at 51 sites across the catchment, from tidal estuarine waters to urban and bushland freshwater reaches during 2023/24 and the data was analysed and released in 2024/25.



The latest 2023/24 River Health Report Card for the Georges River presents a nuanced environmental picture. The estuary's overall ecological rating rose to A–, up from a B in 2021/22, largely driven by reduced turbidity and low rainfall during the sampling period, which resulted in clear and healthy conditions. In contrast, the freshwater reaches dipped slightly to C+ (from B–), reflecting lower macroinvertebrate diversity and degraded water quality following unusually heavy rainfall and flooding. Notably, even relatively untouched bushland areas, including O'Hares Creek, Mill Creek, and Woronora River, saw declines. These appear to be linked to sediment run-off and displaced aquatic organisms during the wet season. Highly urbanised subcatchments, such as Cabramatta Creek and Prospect Creek, also faced pressures from polluted runoff and altered riparian health.

Ongoing data collection strengthens our understanding of trends, informs on-the-ground restoration, and helps build resilience within the catchment's waterways.

Freshwater macroinvertebrates

Riparian vegetation

Water Quality

GRADE	CONDITION
A+	EXCELLENT
A - B+	GOOD
B - C-	FAIR
D+ - F-	POOR

RIVER HEALTH & RESEARCH PROGRAM

In 2024/25, Georges Riverkeeper supported several research initiatives to deepen understanding of the river's ecology and inform restoration work. We assisted a PhD project examining nutrient enrichment in a saltmarsh rehabilitation site, contributing to fieldwork and data collection on vegetation cover and invertebrate abundance. Collaboration with Macquarie University expanded through a postgraduate project using satellite imagery to analyse water quality in the lower Georges River, with Georges Riverkeeper providing feedback on research design.

We also assisted in collating data for NSW Department of Primary Industries' Estuary Asset and Protection Program (NEAP) which focuses on the condition of the estuary and environmental assets with the aim of improving them following 2022 flooding events.



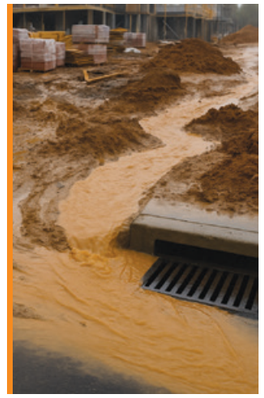
Field-based investigations included sampling to assess mangrove dieback at Picnic Point for NPWS and at the Ampol spill site in Kurnell as part of investigations with NSW EPA and NSW Fisheries, algae monitoring with Liverpool City Council near Chipping Norton for WaterNSW, and ongoing microplastics monitoring using Australian Microplastics Assesment Project (AUSMAP) methodology at ten sites across the catchment. We also worked with Campbelltown City Council to assess microplastic dispersal from synthetic turf during an upgrade at Lynwood Park. These activities enhance the evidence base for management decisions, build partnerships with academic and government agencies, and ensure that restoration strategies are underpinned by robust science.



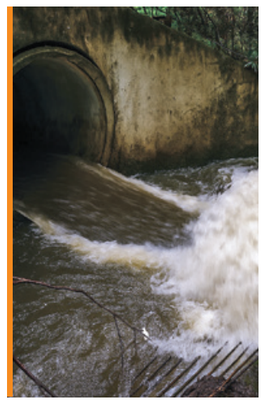


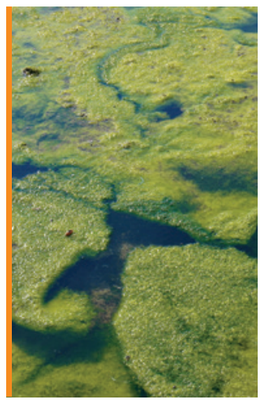
STORMWATER & SEWAGE PROGRAM











Stormwater is a major pathway for pollutants entering the Georges River, carrying sediment, litter, nutrients, and other contaminants from urban areas into our waterways. Through the Stormwater & Sewage Program (S&SP), Georges Riverkeeper partners with councils, agencies, and Sydney Water to improve catchment management, share expertise, and identify opportunities for water quality improvement.

A key initiative is Get the Site Right (GTSR), a multi-agency compliance and education campaign targeting erosion and sediment control on building sites. Two major campaigns were delivered during the year: the October 2024 blitz involved 20 agencies inspecting 748 sites, with $357,410 in fines issued, and the March 2025 blitz which engaged 21 agencies, inspected 867 sites and resulted in fines of $404,780.

Georges Riverkeeper is also facilitating the development of the Georges River Estuary Coastal Management Program (CMP), which will enhance the ecological health and resilience of the estuary. In February 2025, Liverpool City Council with assistance from Georges Riverkeeper secured $665,000 in funding from the NSW Government's Coastal and Estuary Grants Program to support the development of CMP Stages 2–4 over three years. This work will identify risks, evaluate management options, and develop a certified plan for coordinated estuary management.

Our partnership with Sydney Water continues through technical meetings, field visits, and information exchange to ensure better integration of council and utility projects. Sydney Water presented updates to the Committee and facilitated site tours for the Georges Riverkeeper team to highlight infrastructure and planning initiatives.

By fostering collaboration, targeting pollution sources, and securing funding for long-term estuary planning, the S&SP addresses one of the catchment's most significant environmental pressures. These coordinated actions help protect aquatic habitats, safeguard water quality, and reduce pollutant loads before they reach the Georges River.

Images showing the impact of sediment runoff from building sites: loss of building materials, stormwater pollution, algal blooms, threats to wildlife.

EDUCATION & CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM

The Education & Capacity Building Program fosters community stewardship of the Georges River by creating opportunities for people to connect with, learn about, and help the river. In 2024/25, Georges Riverkeeper delivered and supported campaigns, events, and partnerships that encouraged practical action for a healthier river.

Highlights included a Plastic Free July Author Talk and Q&A with Louise Williams, co-author of Quitting Plastic, hosted by Sutherland Libraries and livestreamed.
In partnership with councils and Greater Sydney Landcare, we joined National Tree Day in Liverpool and the Bushcare Fair in Sutherland Shire. We contributed to the Hawkesbury Nepean Waterkeepers Annual Forum panel and led guided paddle tours at Towra Point for Sutherland Shire Bushcare volunteers and from Lambeth Reserve to Fitzpatrick Park with City of Canterbury Bankstown.
For World Water Day, a Yeramba Lagoon Walk and Talk highlighted wetland ecology.

Hands-on litter education featured strongly, with December clean-ups alongside Oatley Bay Sea Scouts and an April Canoe and Clean-Up at Chipping Norton with Liverpool City Council that removed 355 kg of rubbish, a record haul for our annual Clean Up Australia Event.

We supported and promoted the Get the Site Right campaigns in October and March and held a June Litter Prevention River Tour for councillors and stakeholders. Internal communications showcased Georges Riverkeeper's work at Liverpool City Council.

Education materials and updates were delivered through the publication of the 2023/24 River Health Report Card and Annual Report, our website, and social media. We responded to community enquiries on diverse topics, from litter and debris removal to water quality, erosion, fishing, and school assignments.

Through events, advocacy, and direct engagement, the program strengthened community knowledge and motivation to protect the river. Discover more and get involved at georgesriver.org.au or follow our social media channels to enjoy, learn about, and help the Georges River.













OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Operations Management Program (OMP) underpins all aspects of Georges Riverkeeper's work, ensuring effective governance, compliance, and operational delivery. In 2024/25, the Executive Group met regularly to oversee strategy, finance, and performance, while General Committee meetings provided a forum for Member Councils to contribute to decision-making.

Advocacy remained central, with submissions made on key environmental issues, including plastics regulation, PFAS contamination, and catchment management reforms. Targeted engagement with Ministers, agencies, and industry partners helped promote the role of multi-council collaborations in delivering catchment-scale solutions.

Staff training focused on compliance, safety, and professional development, with sessions covering manual handling, workplace conduct, privacy, risk management, cultural engagement, and cyber security.

Policy review was a priority, leading to the adoption of a new Vehicle Use Policy and Agile Working Policy, alongside a major update to the Code of Conduct to align with best-practice governance standards.

Community consultations included engaging with the Aboriginal Advisory groups at Fairfield and Georges River Councils about our Urban Rivers and Catchments programs, regularly contributing to Liverpool Environment Committee meetings and participating in Liverpool City Council's Satyam Ghat stakeholder forums.

Through strong governance, informed advocacy, and continued investment in staff capability, the OMP has ensured Georges Riverkeeper remains a capable, responsive, and well-managed organisation.

FINANCIAL REPORT
GEORGES RIVERKEEPER 2024/25

	LAST YEAR (2023/24)	THIS YEAR (2024/25)
INCOME	**$**	**$**
Membership and Program fees	697,960	968,891
Operating Grants	16,997	233,824
Interest	43,973	63,832
Other Revenue	15,000	20,509
TOTAL INCOME	**773,930**	**1,287,056**
EXPENSES		
Employee benefits expense	316,422	294,268
Depreciation and amortisation expense	10,026	18,098
Materials & Contracts	211,375	513,037
Other expenses		
TOTAL EXPENSES	**537,823**	**825,403**
NET OPERATING RESULT	**236,107**	**461,653**

MEMBERS & STAKEHOLDERS

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

EXECUTIVE GROUP

- Chairperson: Cr Steven Nikolovski, Sutherland Shire Council.
- Vice Chairperson: Cr Paul Sedrak, Bayside Council; Cr David Walsh, City of Canterbury Bankstown.
- 2nd Vice Chairperson: Cr David Walsh, City of Canterbury Bankstown; Leanne Niblock, Sydney Water.
- Treasurer: Cr Peter Mahoney, Georges River Council, Cr Matthew Allison, Georges River Council
- Georges Riverkeeper Program Manager: Kirsten Spry (Acting), Nell Graham
- Georges Riverkeeper Host Manager: Jordan Widenstrom, Sutherland Shire Council; Michael Zengovski, Liverpool City Council.

COUNCILLORS OF MEMBER COUNCILS

- Bayside Council: Cr Paul Sedrak, Cr Andrew Tsounis, Cr Vicki Poulos, Cr Chris Saravinovski.
- Campbelltown City Council: Cr Rey Manoto, Cr Masud Khalil, Cr Matthew Stellino, Cr Cameron McEwan, Cr Jayden Rivera.
- City of Canterbury Bankstown: Cr David Walsh.
- Fairfield City Council: Cr Kevin Lam, Cr Carmen Lazar OAM, Cr Ninos Khoshaba, Cr Michael Mijatovic.
- Georges River Council: Cr Peter Mahoney, Cr Matthew Allison.
- Liverpool City Council: Cr Peter Harle, Cr Fiona MacNaught.
- Sutherland Shire Council: Cr Hassan Awada, Cr Stephen Nikolovski, Cr Kal Glanznig.
- Wollondilly Shire Council: Cr Michael Banasik.

GEORGES RIVERKEEPER STAFF

- Program Manager: Kirsten Spry (Acting), Nell Graham.
- Project Coordinator, Environmental Officer: Robert Dixon.
- Environmental Project Officer Water Quality: Phuong To.
- Catchment Project Officer: Felipe Moretto.
- Administration and Project Support Officer: Lydia Smithers.
- Communications Officer: Kirsten Spry.

STAFF REPRESENTATIVES OF MEMBER COUNCILS AND FINANCIAL PARTNERS

- Bayside Council: Judith Betts, Madelaine Hourihan, Colin Mable, Hong Nguyen, Peter Ryan, Pulak Saha, Elliot Stephens.
- Campbelltown City Council: Ian Andrews, Michaela Beattie, Mitchell Clark, Keira Ebers, Michael Ellison, Jessie Maddock, Will Shaw, Natalie Stewart.
- City of Canterbury Bankstown: Paul Angel, David Lowery, Sasha Marosevac, Jayden McGregor, Lachlan Prentice, Tarah Slattery, Asad Suman.
- Fairfield City Council: Eddie Ferry, Leonie Gray, Helen Pollard, Robert Stevenson.
- Georges River Council: Elyse Ballesty, Mallory McLennan, Emma Mitchell, Fiona O'Brien, Sean Simpson, Andrew Spooner, Craig Wilson.
- Liverpool City Council: Ismail Asad, Joel Daniels, Alexi Gilchrist, Maruf Hossain, Roshan Khadka, Kyran Coogan, Sam Nasser, Michelle Playford, Lee Rennie, Michael Zengovski.
- Sutherland Shire Council: Linda Brown, Corrine Glennan, Andrew Reid, Jason Salmon, Nathan Varley, Jordan Widenstrom.
- Wollondilly Shire Council: Ian Berthon, Bianca Klein, Ibrahim Muharrem.
- Sydney Water: Nathan Harrison, Lyndall Pickering, Leanne Niblock, Nerida Taylor.

STAKEHOLDERS

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







Georges Riverkeeper

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









MEMBERS

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

Sutherland Shire Council

Fairfield City
Celebrating diversity

Liverpool City Council

Canterbury Bankstown

Wollondilly
Shire Council

Georges River Council

Campbelltown

Bayside Council
Serving Our Community

PARTNERS

Financial partner
Sydney Water

NSW Government Justice Corrective Services

National Parks & Wildlife Service NSW

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