

# President's Report 2019

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NOVEMBER 15

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Abbotsford Riverbankers Inc.

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# Introduction

In 2019, things have really started to happen - for our Yarra River corridor in Abbotsford, and for us, the Riverbankers.

Our healthily growing plantings and new sightings of native birds in the area powerfully show how our mission to rehabilitate this long-degraded corridor and advocate for the inner city reaches of the Yarra has started strongly. We have firm strategic foundations and our onsite work is progressing solidly.

We're well placed to strengthen our management planning and processes to support our work long term.

Our 3-year Strategic Plan is in place to guide our planning. Our draft weeding management plan is underway to help guide the biggest challenge of our mission.

We're communicating and reinforcing our mission, message, strategies and activities to our community, partners and stakeholders through a suite of communication platforms and activities.

We've done all of the above by creatively and efficiently using and sharing resources around us. We've delegated tasks to help us focus on our core work, while gradually building experience and expertise.

I'm proud to have led a team of passionate, joyous Riverbankers. A big 'thank you' goes to all our volunteers for their hard work over this huge year. We've put in well in excess of 300 volunteer days!

Huge thanks go to Committee colleagues, our **Treasurer Chris Currie** and **Secretary Helen Macrae**.

Heartfelt thanks also go to our close inner circle of Riverbankers members and supporters; in particular, Salvatore Rapisarda, Jennie Irving, Janey Runci, Max Li, Jane Pemberton, Jane Pilkington, Tomás Vaillo Roman and Nataniel Wolfson.

I acknowledge also with great appreciation our network of supportive partners and stakeholder organisations. In particular, thanks go to Adrian Valente and Craig Lupton (City of Yarra), Rodolfo Maia, Georgina Wakim and Ashleigh Gollege (Parks Victoria), Nathan Mattinson (Melbourne Water), Andrew Kelly and Anton Tejada (Yarra Riverkeeper) and Mark Hursch (VINC Nursery).

Anna Ridgway.

President, Abbotsford Riverbankers Inc.

13 November, 2019

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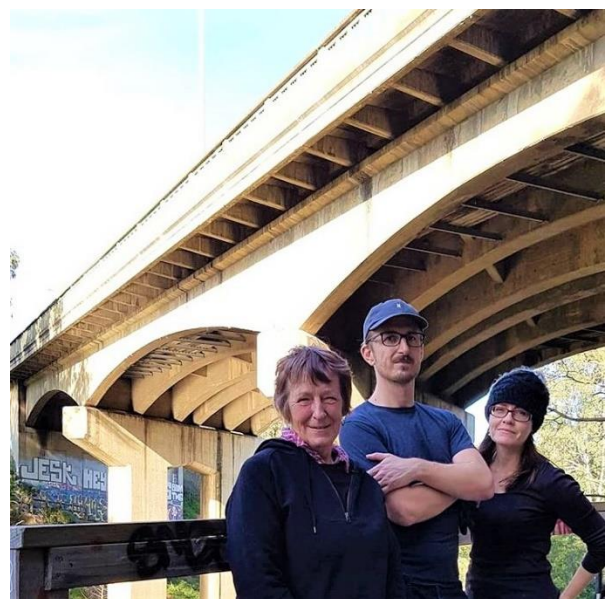
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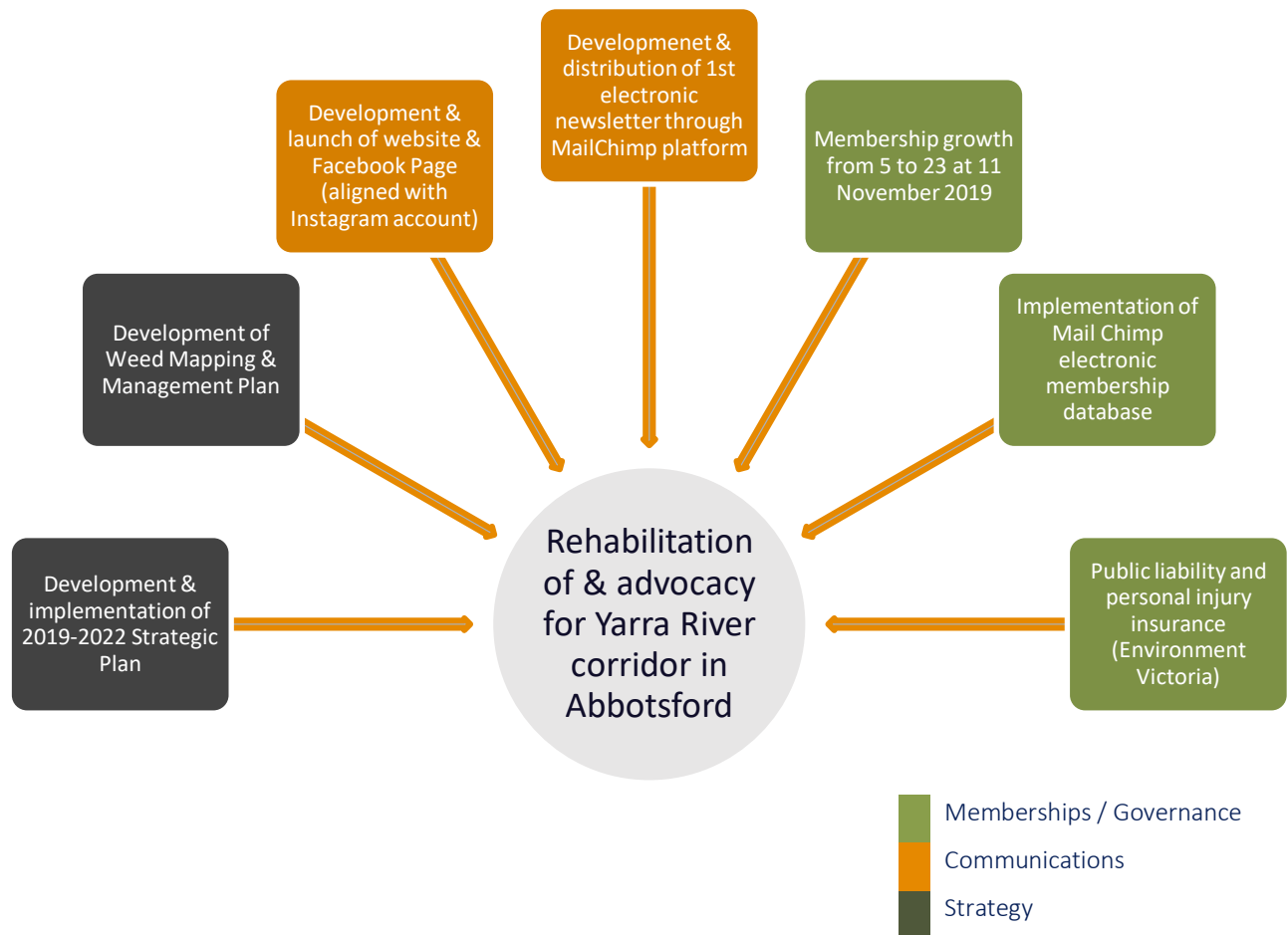


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# 2019 highlights

## Strategic planning & implementation

Our key strategic, governance and communications activities and achievements, aligned to our mission to help rehabilitate and advocate for the Yarra River corridor in Abbotsford, are summarised below.



## Onsite activities

Throughout 2019, the Riverbankers maintained our ongoing work of environmental repair and management of 4 broad (upper) riverine and (lower) riparian sites between Johnston Street Bridge and Dights Falls Reserve. This included **weed removal**, **planting**, **terracing** and other **erosion prevention**, **rubbish collection** from the river edge, **weed and indigenous plant and fungi observation**, **identification**, **monitoring** and initial **mapping** to the Atlas of Living Australia.

We also held 8 fantastic events: **1 large planting bee**, **2 ‘mini’ bees**, **4 ‘micro’ bees** and **1 corporate planting event with 165 participants**. These were wonderful opportunities to spread the message and build community ‘buy-in’ to our mission to rehabilitate our precious Yarra River corridor and foster community custodianship.

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## Event highlights



### Palm to Pyre mini bee

First working bee and community-building **(15 June)**

We removed hazardous palm fronds from the bank and deposited at Collingwood Childrens Farm as base for Winter Solstice bonfire.

This built our credibility as a reliable not-for-profit that doesn't dump our waste.



### Trees and Triangle mini bee

Second working bee at the Turner Street Triangle **(21 July)**

Our first understorey planting event in the Riverbankers' most 'planting-ready' zone.

An excellent community building event with new volunteers and a learning experience for the Riverbankers for planning, traffic and WHS management.



### Resilient Riverbank large group bee

1st planting bee in riparian zone under Parks Victoria **(2 July)**

This event put us on the map. It helped power up a sense of neighbourhood community, which is continuing to build gradually..

The site's high visibility and location in a tough weed zone show how we've confronted early on the big challenges of planning, management and public accountability.



### Corporate planting event

H&H Group employees with Yarra Riverkeeper **(24 October)**

Our first corporate (paid) event and first partnered event with the Yarra Riverkeeper.

165 volunteers in groups of 40 planted understorey in the 'Turner St Triangle'.

A big profile and reputational boost for us and a foundation for future events.

Also a learning experience that will help us set even stronger terms for events with groups of volunteers in this highly traversed, complex and delicate terrain.



### Micro working bees

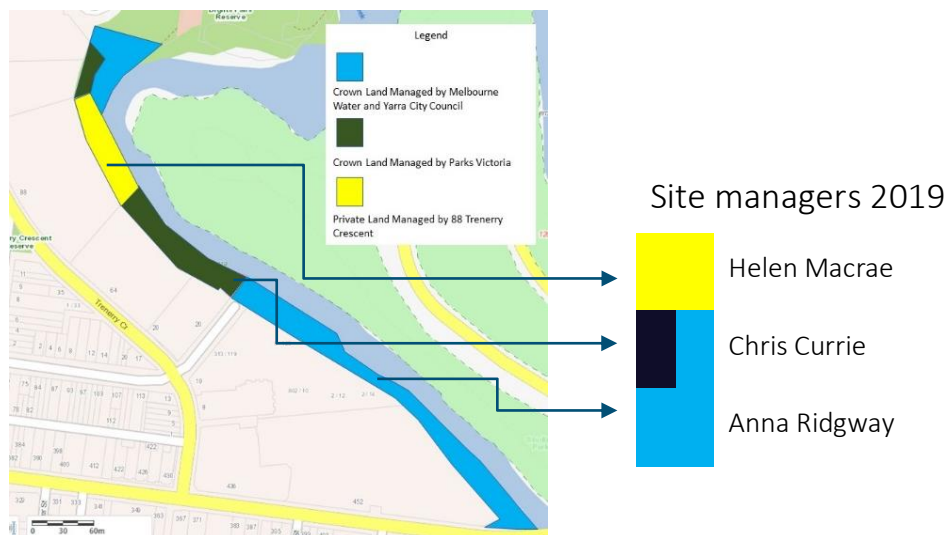
4 mini planting, weeding, harvesting bees in Johnston St Bridge zone **(Jul-Nov)**

Anna Ridgway has been strategically drawing participants into Riverbanker buy-in and involvement through short, targeted working bees that fit around their' interests and availability.

Small group are ideal for this particularly complex and difficult-to-work-in zone, allowing for on-on-one learning, guidance, learning and support, with strong results.

# Other activities

## Site management



**Helen Macrae** has been rehabilitating the upper (riverine) slope between 80 Trenerry Crescent and the concrete retaining wall below Dights Falls Reserve for over 5 years.

Helen is continuing weeding management and revegetation in this section and has begun tackling Madeira vine and other infestations further up the bank. Helen has also strongly supported Anna and Chris in their areas of site management.



**Anna Ridgway** is focusing on implementing the 3 Rs of environmental repair (**Retain, revegetate, replant**) in the extremely degraded riverine area between Johnston St Bridge and the high concrete retaining wall.

She has aligned this work closely with our Strategic Plan and has begun implementing the Weed Management document to eradicate/reduce invasive weeds and their seed bank.

Indigenous species are being planted in 'pods', with an approximately 70% survival rate. These pods are steadily extending as infestation reduces and plants settle in.

**Chris Currie** has been managing the 'Turner Street Triangle', with our most extensive planting to date. He's been log terracing with branches washed up by the river to help soil repair and prevent erosion, plus watering and weeding.

Chris is also managing the mass planting section in the riparian zone, focusing on weed management. Reducing deep kikuyu grass infestation is a top priority. Chris is doing this with the support of landowner Parks Victoria, which is applying organic herbicide and brush cutting.



## Strategic Partnerships/alliances

In 2019 Abbotsford Riverbankers has forged and deepened strategic partnerships, alliances and dialogues with a range of key government and statutory bodies, conservation and professional groups, as summarised below.

### City of Yarra

In-principal support and permissions for site work.

On-site support with weed and rubbish removal, biodiversity strategy sharing, community outreach, intelligence.

### Parks Victoria

In-principle support for work on Parks Vic owned and managed land parcels.

Onsite management support, guidance and intelligence; Resource provision (plant protection, signage, tools loan)

### Melbourne Water

In-principle support for work on MW-managed land; onsite management support, guidance on environmental repair, in-principal support for future resource provision.

### Yarra Riverkeeper Association

Mutually supporting and complementary activities protecting and improving the health of the Yarra River corridor. Cross-promotion, strategic research and intelligence sharing; event partnership.

### Australian Institute of Architects (VIC)

Exploratory dialogue on mutual support and on-the-ground intelligence sharing to align developments with river & environmental values, to support environmental repair of degraded/alienated urban terrain.

### 'Friends' of Groups

Mutual onsite support, expertise and resource sharing (Friends of Andrews Reserve [Boroondara])

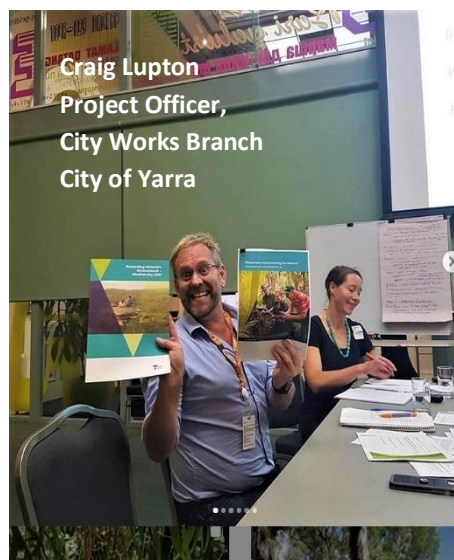
Resource and expertise support (Friends of Damper Creek Reserve [Monash]).

## Advocacy

We've begun advocacy for rehabilitation of urban river corridors, other degraded urban terrain and improving biodiversity in urban environments in the following ways:

1. In February, we contributed to the **City of Yarra's new biodiversity strategy planning**. We participated by invitation in workshops for community conservation groups, as well as providing a written submission.

We look forward to sharing our experience and insights during public consultation in late 2019.



2. In September, Anna Ridgway presented to the **Australian Institute of Architects (Vic)** on the Riverbankers' experience and insights rehabilitating the Yarra River corridor.

Anna was invited to demonstrate how the Riverbankers' work could inform the AIA's **Indigenous Ecosystem Corridors and Nodes project** supporting indigenous revegetation in degraded urban areas.