

Taking to it like a fish to water!

Mitta Mitta Primary School, North East CMA

Students told Mr Mac (Michael) when they were pipped at the post for 'Most waterway site visits' in the state, they wanted to visit the river more.

A small cohort of students from Mitta Mitta Primary School monitors two sites, one at Snowy Creek and one on the Mitta Mitta River. "We are interested in seeing the difference between the two sites. Another teacher and I from the school attended training to learn how to use the equipment (and collect it) so either of us could run the sessions. We participated in the program as we wanted the students to be able to help scientists collect data about rivers and learn how important rivers are to our lives," Michael said.

The school visits the river regularly to collect their samples and test the water. When they are down on the river one student has the data sheet, one has the pH meter. Students rotate the jobs around "they enjoy all having a go."

Michael said "the kids have a better understanding of the macroinvertebrates in the river, as they can identify a caddisfly, stonefly, mayfly and they have a greater appreciation of the water quality here, it's great. We might do an excursion further down the catchment and see if there are any differences past dairy farms to help the students understand how lucky we are here. With this age group, being there and looking at the turbidity tube is important. It is great when they can actually see it and relate to it."

The school has been able to answer their own question about waterway differences. "The water quality is quite similar in both, but the diversity of macroinvertebrates in the Snowy Creek is higher. We believe this is because Snowy Creek is a natural flow, whereas Mitta Mitta is an irrigation river. Sometimes after rain we look and think that the river is dirty but when we sample it is still very clean."

The students are keen to tell other people what is in the river. One day there was a university at the river looking at macroinvertebrates and one of the children was looking at the university students sample trays and said 'Oh you did OK to you got some caddisfly in there'.

"The River Detectives program has provided us an opportunity to get outside of the classroom and learn in another environment, as well as relating the things we do in the classroom to the outside world. The students feel important knowing their results are real science and part of a bigger scientific project," Michael said.



How to get involved

Contact your local River Detectives Coordinator at your Catchment Management Authority or to find out more:

Post: PO Box 18, Huntly Vic 3551
Phone: 03 54487124
Email: riverdetectives@nccma.vic.gov.au
Website: www.riverdetectives.net.au

The River Detectives program acknowledges Aboriginal Traditional Owners across the state and their rich culture and spiritual connection to Country.



Annual Report Card 2017



Sophie and Jason discover the creatures of their school's local waterway, Midland Express

The River Detectives program nurtures community partnerships and offers a unique opportunity for communities that depend on healthy waterways to become actively involved in monitoring their local waterway and taking action.

In 2017, four Catchment Management Authorities collaborated to deliver the River Detectives program, supporting educators through professional learning workshops so they could monitor the health of waterways across Victoria.

The Victorian Government is supporting community partnerships through Waterwatch and other citizen science initiatives to address local waterway priorities. Through Waterwatch, the River Detectives program is addressing these priorities as part of the government's \$222 million Water for Victoria investment over the next four years to improve catchment and waterway health across Victoria.

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In 2017 the River Detectives program connected schools to their local waterway



4000

Students are citizen scientists

104

River Detectives schools/groups including both primary and secondary schools

5

Organisations collaborating

Exceeded our target of 80 schools participating in two years within first year!

"At our school we want to target real life learning, the River Detectives program slotted in nicely".
Nick, Little Bendigo Primary School

Educators and students develop their knowledge and skills

19

Water quality professional learning workshops

167

Educators trained

10

Waterbug professional learning workshops



41

Educators trained

1

Virtual learning session with 9 schools and 135 students



"I didn't know much about the topic before and it [professional learning session] gave me the confidence to do it with the kids". Damien, Murtoa Primary School



218 sets of data entered

*The data collected as part of the River Detectives program feeds into the statewide Waterwatch portal.

80% of teachers improved their connection to their local waterway as a result of the RD program

5 Organisations collaborating:

- Corangamite CMA
- Melbourne Water
- North East CMA
- North Central CMA
- Wimmera CMA



"For the school community to be partnered with other organisations is a positive in itself".
Michelle, Footscray City College

5

New resources developed: a new website; data portal; teacher activity booklet; Saltwatch Week poster; River Detectives stickers

Super Soggy Extras

Saltwatch

50 Participants in Saltwatch Week

16

Billabong Banter chat forum posts

Taking it further: Students sent out surveys to the whole school to get other students opinion about the waterway and to provide them with information about the actual water quality of their local waterway. St Peter Chanel Catholic School, Deer Park

79% felt they increased their knowledge by a reasonable amount

99% were likely to change their practice after attending sessions

75% want to continue the program in 2018

90% felt strongly that the program met their expectations

90% of schools were limited in their participation due to time

100% loved the fish in the data portal to help them rate their water quality



"We have changed the curriculum and are now meeting the school's strategic plan. The school wants more data collected to share more scientific evidence with the greater community".
Lisa, Overnewton Primary School

