



2015 River Detectives program

Exciting opportunities for schools, Landcare and Waterwatch to work together

Are you a school, parent, community or Landcare Group member passionate about your local waterway and environment?

North Central Waterwatch is excited to invite schools in the north central region to register their interest in our River Detectives environmental educational program.

The River Detectives program has been successfully engaging students in key river health and water quality concepts for several years. Due to strong interest and demand, we have developed a new format for delivering the 2015 program to ensure as many students as possible have the opportunity to experience all the River Detectives program has to offer

The River Detectives program enables students to gain an intimate knowledge and love for their local waterway through a variety of hands-on activities including regular water quality testing, macroinvertebrate sampling and habitat surveys. Further cross-curricular activities promote understanding of waterways as integral features of a healthy ecosystem and a healthy community.

Students develop skills in monitoring and enhancing riparian habitats and are encouraged to become custodians of their local waterway.

The program activities align with AusVELS; an incorporation of the Australian Curriculum F-10 within the curriculum framework developed for the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). With sustainability having recently been added to the Australian Curriculum as a cross-curriculum priority, the River Detectives Program can assist schools to embed environmental education in their curriculum.



Taking a closer look at waterbugs.



Learning about the water-testing equipment.



Are you interested in facilitating the program in a school?

We will support you with:

- An online environmental education teaching resource where lesson plans can be accessed, field data sheets can be printed, photos can be uploaded and data can be entered and mapped. Relevant news items, events and links to additional resources will be posted regularly to support your delivery of the program.
- A Train-the-Trainer session to equip teachers/facilitators with the skills and materials necessary to deliver the River Detectives program
- A water-testing kit including equipment to test for water quality parameters such as salinity, turbidity, reactive phosphorus and pH.

Key benefits of this new approach include:

- Accessibility by an larger number of schools
- Opportunity for schools to form valuable partnerships and links with local Landcare Groups and their projects, interested parents or community Waterwatch monitors who may be keen to volunteer and assist in facilitating the program
- Ability for schools to communicate with each other, share ideas and resources and compare results within catchments and along waterways
- Flexibility to adopt the program at any time of the year, for a short-term to align with a theme or long-term to embed sustainability across the curriculum.

Any school can experience all the River Detectives program has to offer, with no obligations around frequency or performance.

How to get involved . . .

Each year, the North Central Waterwatch program will facilitate training sessions. These sessions will be held in the first term and third term each year. New schools, parents, community or Landcare Group members will be encouraged to sign up and participate in the program while people already taking part will be encouraged to attend the sessions as an opportunity to refresh their knowledge and skills.

For more information about the program, flexible delivery options or to register your interest in the River Detectives program please contact:

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Testimonials from teachers, staff, community members and Landcare Groups highlight how beneficial the River Detectives program can be as a stand-alone program, as an ongoing feature of a science/sustainability program and as a vehicle for sparking further sustainability studies, on-ground action and community collaborations.

Felicity Nicholls, Education Support Huntly Primary School and passionate Goornong PS parent:

“One of the greatest thrills I get is watching kids interact with nature. There is a quote I strongly believe in: ‘Children need to touch nature and be touched by it’.

“Over the past few years, I have been lucky enough to work at two schools committed to sustainability — Huntly and Goornong primary schools. Both these schools are part of the North Central Waterwatch River Detectives program.

“Not only do the students learn about the importance of water quality and catchment health, but they get a chance to be involved in scientific monitoring and reporting. They love the fact that they become the eyes and ears on the ground. An extra bonus of the program is when the students learn about salinity and macroinvertebrates through hands-on activities.

“We try to get the kids down to the creek or river as much as possible to strengthen their connectedness with their local waterway. It doesn’t take long before the kids realise that the survival of living things are affected by the physical conditions of their environment.

“What is even more exciting is the fact that these kids are out there now doing things to help their local waterways.”



Cathy McCallum, passionate volunteer at Baringhup Primary School:

“Since the Baringhup Primary School has become involved with the Waterwatch monitoring program a number of the students have become proficient in the testing procedure and even more have become engaged with the river and have a connection with the river environs that I believe was not there prior to becoming River Detectives.

“In 2010 and 2011 the River Detective students were an extremely capable bunch of kids and I was encouraged by their enthusiasm and intelligence.

“As a result of their interest we submitted articles for the local newspaper *The Tarrangower Times* illustrating aspects of the Waterwatch work the testing data and their experiences on the river. The articles were well received. “

