



RiverTracks Program Model Outline

RiverTracks will offer a lifeline to struggling young people by reconnecting them back to the community, practical learning to help them find employment and life-changing opportunities and pathways for a better future.

Acknowledgement of Country

RiverTracks acknowledges the peoples of the Bundjalung Nation as well as other nations near the Tweed Valley area. We pay respect to their cultures, and acknowledge the strong and continuing connection to their land, sea and waterways. Always was, always will be Aboriginal Land.

RiverTracks Background

RiverTracks is a local program that has been established voluntarily by a group of Tweed Valley youth workers and community members. Our program complements the work of our wonderful local existing youth services by offering an ongoing program to young people who are disengaging or are already completely disengaged in schooling. RiverTracks offers a life-line by helping them build skills that will lead them towards employment and achieving their life goals. Our program runs Monday and Tuesday with a small group of disengaged boys in the Murwillumbah area aged 12 and over.

Through the program participants get to develop their work skills but also connect participants to animals and receive opportunities to give back to and feel part of the community. The program will generally run school hours and through the school term but will also offer occasional weekend activity opportunities and trips away through both the term and school holidays. The program will partner with businesses, community organisations, farmers, tradies and training providers and will focus on building relationships with the participants to develop the program further.

What will the program involve and where will it operate?

Our purpose is to co-create a safe, supportive and inclusive community with young people that provides belonging, life skills and work pathways. The RiverTracks program achieves this by working flexibly with program participants to explore opportunities to learn practically, have fun, be active and be part of the community.

Our initial program will involve:

- € Bicycle mechanic workshops
- € Working with, training and caring for therapy dogs and pound dogs
- € Learning and working on local farms
- € Running a yard work social enterprise
- € Doing jobs to help community members and organisations
- € Developing trade skills working on small building projects
- € Outdoor nature based adventures
- € Other opportunities to learn and connect to the community

Based from underneath the Murwillumbah Scout Hall at 47 Brisbane St the RiverTracks programs works with program participants to further explore the activity and vocational directions they are most interested in with the longer term goal of establishing a social enterprise. The program engages therapeutic approaches of working with young people to role model and learn through practice accountability, responsibility, self-awareness and communication skills. The program is based on the model of BackTrack and their pursuit of the Circle of Courage goals of mastery, generosity, independence and belonging.

Our goals are to:

- Engage young people at risk in long term programs that offer personal and professional growth and realistic work pathways. We aim to do this by developing spaces and training staff and volunteers that are able to support the needs of the young people in our programs.
- To create opportunities for young people at risk to build practical skills, build more inclusive communities that foster belonging, re-connect young people to the local community and culture.
- To connect young people at risk to ongoing healthy friendship, mentor and community relationships.
- To involve young people in planning and decision making.
- To work in a way that is inclusive, flexible, supportive, patient and full of unconditional love.
- To take responsibility for our actions and be accountable for the consequences.
- To grow long term relationships with community, business and government to invest in the thriving community that is RiverTracks.

Our Approach

Through a participatory community development approach, RiverTracks prioritises empowering young people and engaging with them where they're at. We provide a supportive community and opportunities to explore with young people to then co-create and develop the program hand-in-hand with the young people involved. By working with young people in this way the RiverTracks program has established a caring culture of learning, respect, creativity and trust between the young people, the support workers and the community.

Practice Principles

- **Integrity** – we do what we say we do
- **Connection** – we listen, are respectful and non-judgmental. We run a daily muster check-in circle to start and end each day.
- **Skill** – our workers, mentors and volunteers are well trained
- **Focus** – it's all about the young people
- **Strength** – we support young people to find their strengths, use them, master them and celebrate them
- **Creativity** – we go with the flow, are flexible and able to adapt & change
- **Reflection** – we are all about continuous improvement, learning and understanding

Expected Benefits of RiverTracks:

The participant goals of RiverTracks are to:

- Feel supported, listened to and respected by non-judgemental healthy role models.
- Become empowered, know their strengths, use them, master them and celebrate them
- Develop life and vocational skills that will assist the young person to find employment.
- Increase engagement and openness with family, education opportunities and the community
- Cultivate a sense of connection, belonging and responsibility to the community.
- Improve mental, emotional and social wellbeing.
- Decrease criminal risk-taking, drug, alcohol and other anti-social behaviours.

Who are the youth workers?

Ahri Tallon is a youth worker, community organiser and community development worker based in Murwillumbah, NSW; Moorang-Moobar of the Bundjalung language group. After working in systems advocacy and campaigning organisations for most of his life his interest has transitioned towards community work where he seeks opportunities to work with young men to support healthy masculinity, mental health, positive identities and community participation and secure employment. Ahri has worked for over two years as a residential youth worker for young people in out of

home care and has also worked in community centres, as a teachers aide and as a disability support worker. He holds a Bachelor of Business, Diploma in Community Services and Graduate Certificate in Community Development.

Ahri Tallon's NSW Working with Children Check Registration Number is WWC2048730E

Eligibility Criteria and Cost:

Cost:

RiverTracks is a free program funded by community donations, sponsorships, foundation support and grants.

Eligibility and Selection Considerations:

The RiverTracks is currently **limited to boys around the ages of 12 and over who live in the Tweed Shire with transport to Murwillumbah. Our primary selection consideration is to engage young people who are no longer attending school very often or at all.** Other participant needs based selection considerations include having:

- € Having past or present criminal charges.
- € Drug usage tendencies and or other serious life challenges that are making engagement in education difficult.
- € Learning difficulties and behavioural challenges.
- € Mental, emotional and social wellbeing challenges.

Contact details

Email: ahri@rivertracks.org

Mobile: 0493 206 791

Website: www.rivertracks.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/rivertracks