



RiverTracks Tweed Valley Referral Information Pack

RiverTracks offers a lifeline to struggling young people by reconnecting them back to the community, practical learning to help them find employment and life-changing opportunities that create 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.

We support the goals of the Walking Together, Working Together Partnership Agreement between the NSW Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group Inc and the NSW Department of Education 2020 to 2030. We will seek to establish an Indigenous Advisory Committee as we set up and become operational.

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.

What makes RiverTracks unique?

- **RiverTracks is optional in that participants are not made to stay.** Young people choose to be there which changes the nature of their relationship with staff and other participants.
- RiverTracks is an ongoing program that keeps going. **Kids do not get kicked out and it is not a short-term program.** Participants have consistent access to the safe place which is the program site, support, learning opportunities and community that is provided.
- **RiverTracks uses the 10/10/80 ratio.** Which means we spend most of our time with young people looking at their future by focusing on building skills and abilities that can help the young person find identity and employment.
- We focus on engaging young people through practical learning and connection with nature and animals.
- RiverTracks **builds community and has programs that facilitate group development**, friendship and bonding between participants.
- RiverTracks focuses on **creating respectful agreements with young people about behaviour and communication rather than imposing rules.**

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

Richard Luke is a local builder and active community member. In a former life he was a teacher in Sydney and London where he worked in a school for young people with challenging behaviours. Richard is keen to share his skills and work alongside young people on finding their way in life. Richard is a grounded, aware, sensitive and intuitive man who is a dedicated father and role model for his four children.

Richard Luke's NSW Working with Children Check Registration Number is WWC2357097V

Other youth workers will be employed as the program is established and more young people are invited to participate. To find out more about the rest of the RiverTracks team you can visit: www.rivertracks.org/team/

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.

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.

Please note: RiverTracks is an educational skills based program but enrolled school students are not yet able to get formal exemptions to participate. Our existing participants either study at distance education or have mental health exemptions from full school attendance. Participation of young people requires parental consent and acknowledgement that the program does not void their obligations for their child or the young person under their care to attend accredited education programs.

Referral Pathway Steps:

1. If you know a young person who you think could benefit from the program please start by giving Ahri a call on 0493 206 791 to ask any questions and discuss the referral. We encourage parents to make the referral or educators to assist parents to do so. When ready referrals can be made from [Expression of Interest Form linked here](#) (visit our website referral page if the link is broken).
2. The RiverTracks team will consider EOIs according to our selection criteria.
3. The RiverTracks team will make contact with referrers of young people who are selected as potential program participants to ask and answer any questions arising.
4. The RiverTracks youth worker will call the young person to speak with them and arrange to meet with them and the referrer if the young person would like them to attend.
5. At the meeting the young people will be given more information about the RiverTracks program, how it operates and the opportunities it would offer. We will explain how RiverTracks would fit in as part of their education and how their continual attendance at school when not working with RiverTracks is

encouraged. The young person will then be asked whether they want to be involved in RiverTracks or whether they need more time to decide.

6. If the young person wants to take part in the program they will be given an intake form to complete with their parent/carer. If there are any issues inhibiting their selection for the program or questions arising from the intake form referrers will receive contact from RiverTracks.
7. RiverTracks will confirm the participants' invitation to be part of the program with phone calls to the young person and the referral maker.

Information Exchange and Privacy

Information sharing between Youth on Track, referral agencies and other service providers is authorised under Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. This is for the young person's safety, welfare or wellbeing or where this will ensure the safety and wellbeing of others.

Contact details

Email: ahri@rivertracks.org

Mobile: 0493 206 791

Website: www.rivertracks.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/rivertracks

Other Support Contact Numbers:

Link2Home – 1800 152 152

- 24/7 information, assessments and referrals to homeless support and accommodation services across NSW

Mental Health Line – 1800 011 511

- 24/7 telephone service for acute mental health situation
- Will assist in providing a direct link with a local Mental Health Service

Lifeline – 13 11 14

- 24/7 telephone crisis support and suicide prevention and mental health support services (common issues include: personal crisis, anxiety, depression, loneliness, abuse, trauma, stress, self-help)
- Online crisis support chat (7pm – 4am, everyday)
- lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636

- 24/7 support for all ages regarding anxiety, depression, suicide and related issues
- Online support chat (3pm – 12am, everyday)
- beyondblue.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467

- 24/7 telephone and online counselling to people aged 15+ who may be suicidal, be caring for someone who is suicidal, be bereaved by suicide
- suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Family Drug Support – 1300 368 186

- 24/7 telephone support for families affected by alcohol and other drugs

Domestic Violence Line – 1800 656 463

- 24/7 telephone counselling, information and referrals for women and same sex partners who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence
-