



*Transforming young lives and building
community in the Tweed Valley*

2022 PROGRAM PROSPECTUS

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

www.rivertracks.org

Summary

RiverTracks has demonstrated the opportunity our community has to work together and re-engage young people who are dropping out of education and making risky choices.

After starting operations in November 2021, we have grown to a program of seven participants with more enquiries coming in. The young people are enjoying the program and are starting to feel hopeful about a future they are beginning to be able to imagine for themselves.

Young people today face a lot of uncertainty in a fast changing world. The impacts of fires, Covid19, floods and increasing global stability are all felt both directly and indirectly by young people as a world that may not seem to offer pathways for their future or be completely safe for them.

This is why RiverTracks' purpose is to co-create a safe, supportive and inclusive community with young people that provides belonging, life skills and work pathways.

We spent a lot of energy establish a workshop under the Murwillumbah Scout Hall and despite having to re-build much of it after the floods we are more determined than ever to keep going.

With the support of our amazing community and volunteers, this is RiverTracks' plan to keep transforming lives and build community in the Tweed Valley.

Thanks for reading,

Ahri Tallon

Founder, President and Youth Worker



Our Vision

We envision a world where vulnerable young people are empowered with opportunities for belonging, and the skills to find their individual purpose.

About RiverTracks

RiverTracks offers a lifeline to disengaged young people by helping them to build skills that will lead them towards employment and achieving their life goals. RiverTracks was first inspired by the successful BackTrack program based in Armidale and has been established by a group of Tweed Valley youth workers and community members.

The program is free and runs on a Monday and Tuesday with occasional extra days for volunteer work and training opportunities and recreational activities on weekends. It focuses on developing work skills, building relationships with and engaging at-risk young people thirteen and above. We work flexibly with young people to explore their interests and create pathways for them to develop life skills and practical capabilities in their interest areas.

By working with local charities, landholders and businesses to create mutually beneficial exchanges, working therapeutically with dogs, running weekend activities and hosting guest activities we co-create a safe, supportive and inclusive community-based support program for vulnerable young people that ensures they feel they belong to and are valued by our community.

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 and re-connect 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 Achievements so far:

RiverTracks has already achieved so much in such a short time, here is a list of everything we are proud of:

- Program retention
 - Growing our program participants to 7 young people in our Monday and Tuesday (with extra days on some weekends and for flood clean up volunteering)
 - Having a high retention rate only having lost 2 of 9 participants since starting the program.
 - A current average attendance of 5.5 young people per day (recently got to 7 participants).
- Youth Welfare
 - Working with participants to set goals about their careers.
 - Supporting participants to apply for jobs and get their resume developed.
 - Supporting one participant through advocacy to get admission into partial school attendance.
 - Supporting one participant to give up smoking cannabis.
 - Doing drug harm reduction and harm prevention education with all participants.
 - Supporting one participant to go through a restorative process with a business owner after illegally drinking on the premises.
- Volunteering
 - Assisting community members, businesses and farmers with volunteer flood clean up.
 - Volunteering at the Friends of the Pound to train, care and give affection to dogs.
 - Helping out the Murwillumbah Community Garden with mowing and building jobs.
- Skills
 - Doing repair work on second-hand bikes and learning mechanical skills.
 - Started a RiverTracks Yard Work, a lawn, landscaping, bush regeneration and odd job social enterprise which has already attracted 6 regular clients.
 - Taking program participants through their White Card Safety training certificate.
 - Developing participants' woodwork skills and skills using power tools safely.
 - Developing life skills like cooking and supporting participants to learn self-regulation and awareness skills.
- Organisation
 - Fundraising for and purchasing a 12 seater Hiace Van to help grow the program and take on new kids.
 - Replacing a ute that got flooded with another second hand ute for the program.
 - Running a three day Summer Holiday camp at Woody Head and two other day adventure activities.
 - Building and then re-building after the flood, a storage area, a workshop and a hang out room under the Murwillumbah Scout Hall.
 - Employed two youth workers 2 days a week and an business manager one day per week.
 - Budget of \$90,000 per year.

Based underneath the Murwillumbah Scout Hall at 47 Brisbane St the RiverTracks programs works with program participants to further explore different vocational directions and set goals for their future. 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 Youth Works and the 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 here 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.

Meeting the Need to Support Vulnerable Young People:

Young people in our community have faced cascades of disruption over the last two and a half years. The devastating fires, prolonged social upheaval of Covid19 and most recently the record breaking NSW 2022 floods have all left their mark on young people.

In Australia today 1 in 5 young people are not at school, 1 in 4 are dealing with a mental health issue and roughly 28,000 young people are sleeping rough. Substance misuse and a lack of a father figure impact many of the young people we work with at RiverTracks.

The young people we are working with are struggling to stay engaged in schooling, struggle with a variety of mental health challenges and all have challenging behaviours. These are young boys who will grow into men in our community. They are young boys looking for role models, opportunities and support to experience something life affirming and to set goals that can drive their future forward.

RiverTracks brings together diverse skills development opportunities, therapeutic youth worker mentoring and our supportive community together to be there for our participants.

By walking alongside and supporting these boys we see them develop into young men. As they become accountable for their actions, set and achieve goals, follow their passions and become active and responsible members of our community. Importantly our program works with the healing power of interacting with animals, and allows participants to witness the silence and surrender of immersions in nature that help to build skills and confidence in participants that will take their life forward.

RiverTracks' Vision for the Future

Target young people:

RiverTracks is currently working with seven high school aged and above boys and young men from around the Tweed Shire area aged 13 and up.

Over the next 6-12 months we hope to secure enough funding to employ an additional female youth worker and be able to welcome girls and young women into the program.

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:

- 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.

Program directions:

RiverTracks develops the program in collaboration with the young people who are part of it. We know based on what our youth workers have discussed with them and the goals they have set that RiverTracks youth want to:

- Continue to grow our yard work social enterprise and expand its services
- Learn more about woodwork by building chicken houses.
- Experience opportunities to learn how to grow and sell food
- Develop their mechanical skills on restorations of engines.
- Go on work trips to other areas to learn new skills and meet new people
- Be able to attend the program three days a week
- Go through vocational traineeships such as a Cert II in Construction Pathways through RiverTracks

- Continue working with dogs at the pound and supporting the community through volunteer work
- Get support and mentoring to write resumes, gain references and apply for jobs

Organisation directions:

- Take youth workers through training in group design and facilitation.
- Improve our workshop design, tools inventory and organisation.
- Offer weekend activities once a month and overnight camps every school holidays.
- Create a business sponsorship program with branding opportunities on our Hiace, ute and work shirts.
- Establish a regular giving program to improve our financial sustainability.

RiverTracks Workshop Site:

Currently RiverTracks is operating from under the Murwillumbah Scout Hall at 47 Brisbane St. We are very grateful to the Scouts for hosting us and enjoy being close to the community.

However we know that in the long term we need a workshop and program site that is on the edge of, or out of town, so it is a more peaceful place for participants, and is also out of the flood zone.

What we need funding for in 2022-2023 and beyond

From mid 2022 to mid 2023 RiverTracks aims to consolidate our program and build our organisation so that we are ready to sustainably meet the growing needs of more struggling young people in the Tweed Valley.

Any general operations grants and philanthropic support to RiverTracks will help us:

Goal

Funding Goal

Establish a building fund so that when we are able to find a long term site of our own we will have the finance to set it up.

\$100,000

Paying our business manager and two youth workers for more of the work they do. Currently all three of our staff are paid only for a portion of the work they do.

\$200,000

Goal	Funding Goal
Employing a female youth worker 2 days a week so we can begin bringing girls and young women into the program.	\$40,000
Continue our operations and cover general equipment and maintenance costs.	\$25,000

How to support RiverTracks to change more young lives:

Make a donation

To discuss how you can become a philanthropic supporter for RiverTracks please contact our Fundraising Director Richard Roberts on richard@rivertracks.org or 0409 227 844

All donations are tax deductible.

Corporate Sponsorship

To discuss how you can become a sponsor of RiverTracks through a mutually beneficial relationship and receive exposure for your brand contact Ahri Tallon on ahri@rivertracks.org

Collaborate with us

Above all, we believe the success of our program rests on our ability to work together as a broader community to create collaborative opportunities for young people at risk.

If you are from an organisation that may be able to assist our team and program with activities or training for our young people and or staff, contacts, mentoring, resource sharing or just some advice please get in touch.

Contact Us:

Admin Email and phone number: admin@rivertracks.org and 0412 203 686
 Youth Worker email and phone number: ahri@rivertracks.org and 0493206791
 Website: <http://www.rivertracks.org>
 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/rivertracks>

