



# My Cooks River

Stage 1 Progress Report May 2006

**My Cooks River** is a bold project that sets the goal of engaging young people and their communities throughout the Cooks River basin. The project is an initiative of Oz GREEN that is proudly supported by the Orica Community Foundation, Vodafone Australia Foundation, Canterbury Council, Marrickville Council, Rockdale Council, City of Botany Bay Council, Sydney Water Streamwatch, Sydney Airport Corporation, Strathfield Girls High School, Randwick Boys High School, Banksmeadow Public School, JJ Cahil High School and Malek Fahd Islamic School.

My Cooks River is based on Oz GREEN's MYRiveR program that is being successfully implemented throughout the Murray-Darling basin.

**My Cooks River** is a whole river basin environmental education and engagement program that harnesses youth passion, intelligence and commitment to build pathways to sustainable river futures.

Stage 1 MYRiveR involved a whole catchment eco-snapshot, youth congress and community forum. Young people assessed the health of the environment, developed their own vision and action plans and presented their findings back to their community.

Stage 2 MYRiveR continues to build social capital through Youth LEAD training and on-going support to participating schools as young people implement the eco-social projects they have designed during the youth congress. (Youth LEAD training workshop scheduled for 8-10 July 2006)

## Aims

- 1) Engage, equip and enable young people to assess the health of their rivers and develop their own voice, vision and action plans to care for their rivers.
- 2) Build and mobilise a catchment wide network of young people actively working in their own community and beyond to care for the Cooks River.
- 3) Foster the development of youth leadership and social enterprise skills.
- 4) Enable informed and active youth participation in the democratic process and civil society.



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## Activities

*Monday April 3:* Eco-Snapshot – Participating schools worked with Oz GREEN and local organisations such as Streamwatch and Councils, to take the pulse of the river to check on its health (environmental assessments, biodiversity, water quality parameters such as dissolved oxygen, turbidity, faecal coliform, salinity, pH and nutrients).

*Tuesday - Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> April:* 2-Day Regional Youth Congress – Students conducted community surveys, interpreted water testing results, identified how the river is important, the threats to catchment health, developed youth vision for the future of the river and action plans for how they will contribute to the care of the catchment.

*Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April:* Youth-led Community Forum – Students presented the results of their findings to the local community and invited the community to get behind their action plans.

## My Cooks River School Action Plans 2006

School	Summary of Action Plan
Strathfield Girls High School	Raise awareness in the school about local and global water problems. Posters, ads and talks on assembly. Set up a school water committee. Make a video about water and actions to save water.
Banksmeadow Public School	Organise a school water fete to draw attention to ideas and products for saving water and also raise funds to help East Timor water problems.
JJ Cahill High School	Start up a school sustainable living program. Begin with school talks on assembly. Do school ecological footprint measurement. Campaign to save water and waste. Adopt a village in East Timor – soccer game to raise funds.
Malek Fahd Islamic School	Set up a school environment committee. Focus on saving water, energy and waste in school and school community. Make posters and newsletters.
Randwick Boys High School	School water saving project. Set up talks for monthly school group meetings that show ideas for action. Set up school environment award to reward groups that get best results.

## Stage 2: Follow-up support and Youth LEAD

*Follow-up support* for schools as they implement their action plans will continue during 2006. **Youth LEAD** (Youth Environmental Leadership Development) – Youth leadership, enterprise and strategic questioning skills training, with follow-up mentoring and support as Youth LEADers initiate their own eco-social projects. The Youth LEAD 3-day training workshop is scheduled for 8-10 July 2006 at Bundilla Activity Centre, Winston Hills.

**Oz GREEN** (Global Rivers Environmental Education Network Australia Inc) is an independent, not for profit organisation that was established in 1992. Oz GREEN is dedicated to enabling informed and active community participation in the care of our rivers. Oz GREEN senior staff have over 30 years experience in the field of youth and community environmental education and engagement in rural and urban Australia and internationally in India, Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Pakistan. They are backed by a dedicated and skilled team of young professionals. Oz GREEN has a 10 year track record of conducting award winning environmental education programs in the Cooks River basin. See [www.ozgreen.org.au](http://www.ozgreen.org.au) © **Oz GREEN 2006**

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