

23rd International

# RIVER SYMPOSIUM

EXCELLENCE – COLLABORATION – INTEGRATION

9-13 NOVEMBER 2020 | VIRTUAL

VALUING OUR RIVERS

REPORT TO OUR  
PARTNERS

MANAGED BY

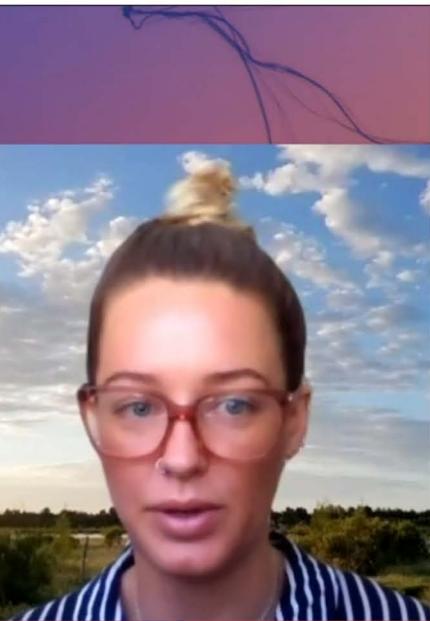




23rd International

# RIVER SYMPOSIUM

9-13 NOVEMBER | ONLINE



23rd International  
**RIVERSYMPIOSIUM**  
9-12 November 2020 | Online



# Thank you

The 23<sup>rd</sup> International Riversymposium (IRS) was held virtually for the first time! The whole world became our venue for this event – our boundaries to share and learn from each other ceased to exist.

For all of us, 2020 is the year of change. The COVID-19 pandemic has and is continuing to change the world – causing significant interruptions to our traditional activities and the way we go about our lives. The pandemic has allowed us to reflect and look at opportunities to remain connected, and work together to have a future where healthy, resilient rivers support thriving communities, ecosystems, and economies.

**Thank you to you, our passionate partners and donors in helping make the first ever virtual Riversymposium (v-IRS 2020) a success!**

Together with our digital partners, **Iconic Live**, we continued to provide a unique global forum for river champions across the academic/ research, government, business and community sectors to share knowledge and experiences - all in the safety of your offices and surroundings without the need for travel.

We are proud of the longevity and commitment of the Riversymposium's platinum partner, **Brisbane City Council** and gold partner, **Australian Water Partnership (AWP)**. This year, we also welcome back the support of the **Asian Development Bank** and our new partner **San Antonio River Basin Authority** as our silver partners.

The **Diversity in Water** event sponsored by AWP was a great way to start the symposium. The Learn-Inspire-Transform sessions were once again popular this year. The theme of unlocking the financial resilience of our rivers had so much interest this year.

To continue from the launch of the International *Resilient Rivers Blueprint* partners in IRS 2019, we had three special sessions focusing on the Blueprint, with several river basins around the world presenting their results of the River Journey and River Personality tools. *River Basins of Asia*, sponsored by the Asian Development Bank, was also an opportunity to discuss resilience and innovative funding mechanisms for rivers in the region, including the Yellow River in China, Tuul River in Mongolia, Ratu River in Nepal, Kapuas River in Indonesia, and Ravi River in Pakistan.

The inaugural *Save our Rivers Ball*, held in Customs House (Brisbane) was also the v-IRS Gala Dinner. Due to COVID safety requirements it was restricted to 80 VIP guests including members of our *RiverPatrons* Group; however, the program was live streamed to all the delegates on the platform. A heartfelt thank you to the impressive, Jo Bacallo for producing the *Save our Rivers* appeal video – you touched everyone's hearts that evening. To our raffle and silent auction sponsors, your support will go a long way in the journey towards river resilience in a developing country.

To our ever-growing global group of dedicated volunteers - our first Virtual Volunteer Programme convened by our Vera Thies 2019 scholar Qing Ye - we thank you wholeheartedly for your contribution.

To all of you who joined us, and gave the first-ever virtual IRS a go – we are grateful for your invaluable contribution, knowledge, insights, as well as patience with the technical glitches in some cases. We are very honoured to give you all your very own verifiable microcredential/digital badge for being part of the Riversymposium.

**On behalf of the IRF Board and staff, thank you! We look forward to meeting you all during the 24<sup>th</sup> International Riversymposium which will be held in Brisbane, Australia.**



**Dr Eva Abal**

**CEO, International RiverFoundation**

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# FAST FACTS

309

Delegates

24

Countries

5

Days

6

Keynote  
Speakers

9

Learn-Inspire-Transform  
Sessions

2

Virtual Study Tours

1

Virtual RiverExpo

40

Presentations

8

RiverFilms

# What is Riversymposium?

International Riversymposium is the pre-eminent international river conference linking business to science, policy and communities.



## RIVERSYMPOSIUM OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Celebrate best practice and the 'knowledge portal'
- ✓ Create a global network of experts and practitioners
- ✓ Address river and catchment issues in urban and rural settings
- ✓ Facilitate business opportunities related to river management
- ✓ Be a catalyst of reform in policy and practice

**Uniting river managers globally. Developing the business of water and river management. Designed to leverage the export of knowledge and best practices in water management to the world.**

We connect companies, communities and individuals, providing the expertise, opportunity and support to be part of the solution, and to establish an enduring legacy through a holistic approach to water and river management.

## SPONSORED DELEGATES

Through the Sponsored Delegates Program IRF and its partners financially support a number of river scientists and practitioners from less developed countries to attend the International Riversymposium each year.

# The Virtual Difference

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that *Riversymposium* could not be run in China as planned, therefore IRF partnered with Iconic Live, an Australian online event management company, to provide the virtual platform – Delegate Connect. This innovative and engaging platform meant that delegates and presenters experienced a program that was simple to navigate and easy to use.

Iconic live, our exclusive digital partner ensured the smooth transition of the IRS to an online event. All keynote speakers, presenters and facilitators, as well as delegates were kept informed and prepared at all times by the very able technical team.

In addition to the Delegate Connect platform the IRF also utilised Remo, an online networking platform that immersed delegates further into the v-IRS. Remo enables participants to select a table to sit at and they can move from table to table, share virtual business cards and chat between one another via video or text. Both Diversity in Water and Virtual Networking was run in this platform.

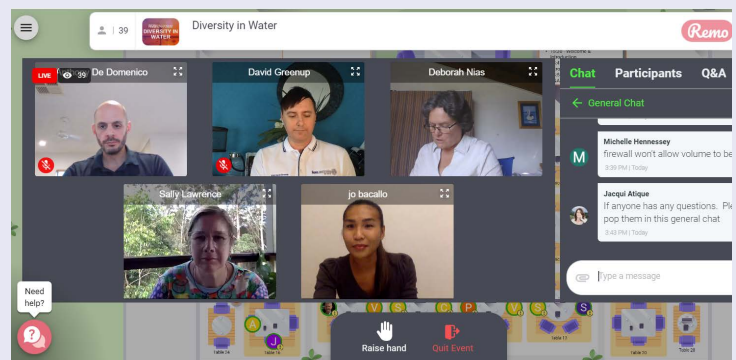
The challenge of virtual conferences is to make delegates feel connected and engaged. We feel that Delegate Connect and Remo did this successfully. In addition, our online social networking events such as Rivers Got Talent! and River Trivia also bridged the gap between a virtual event and a face-to-face event.

2021 will no doubt still be affected by the pandemic and therefore it is intended that *Riversymposium* will continue to offer a virtual option for delegates who cannot attend a face-to-face event.

## Program Highlights

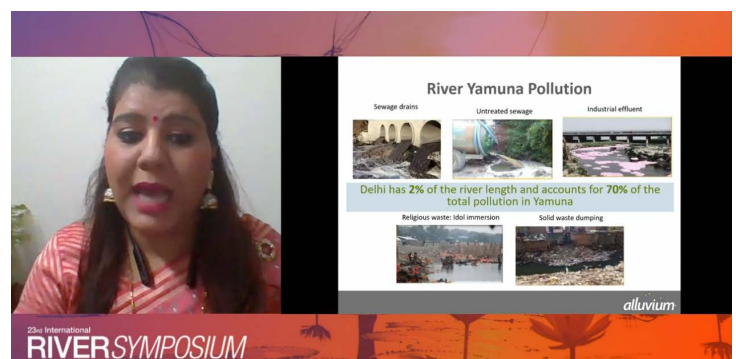
### DIVERSITY IN WATER

Diversity in Water was held using the networking platform Remo. The theme “Working across boundaries” saw four panel members, Jo Bacallo, Anthony De Domenico, David Greenup and Sally Lawrence, come together to discuss working in river management across sectoral, geographical, cultural and gender boundaries.



### SPONSORED DELEGATES

This year, the International RiverFoundation and the Asian Development Bank supported over 50 delegates from developing countries to attend *Riversymposium*. This included delegates from Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, South Africa, Kenya, Chile, Brazil and Indonesia.





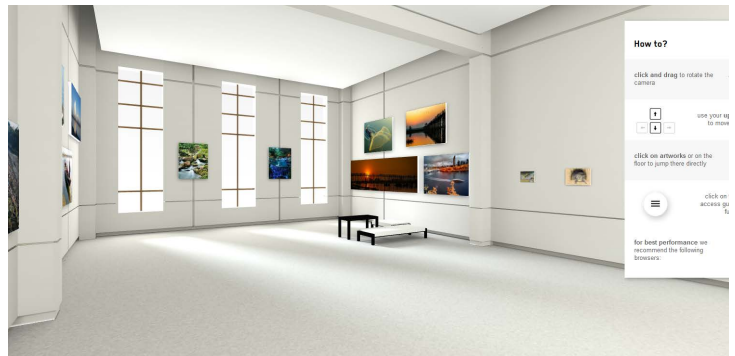
## RIVERS GOT TALENT

Rivers Got Talent was an online talent competition which received seven extremely high level of entrants. Two winners were announced during *Riversymposium*. The People's Choice winner was the New World Rhythm Choir from the Queensland's Sunshine Coast and the Judges Prize went to Brett Leavy, a First Nations, Digital Aboriginal who descends from the Kooma People.



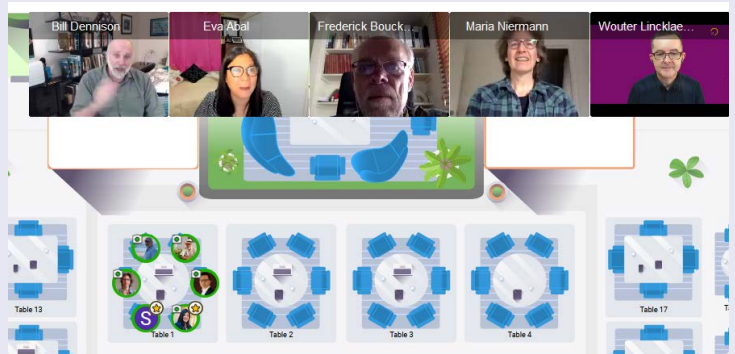
## RIVERGALLERY

RiverGallery was introduced this year to provide delegates with another way to feel connected to the subject matter - rivers. Artists were invited to submit photos, drawings and paintings that were then displayed in the online 3D gallery at no cost to the artist. We received 25 submissions from all over the world. It is envisaged that RiverGallery will become a regular part of *Riversymposium* in the future.



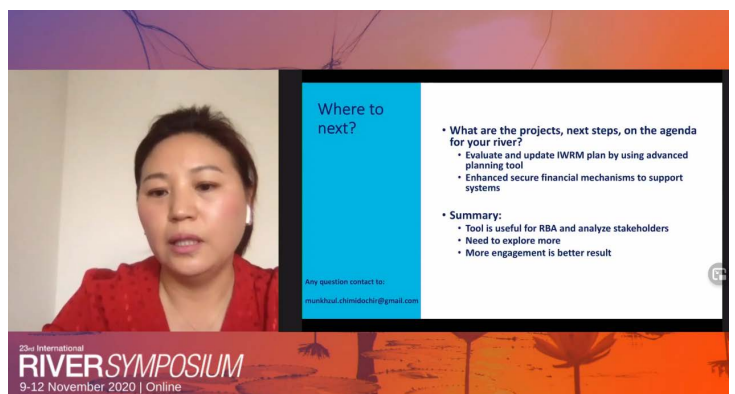
## VIRTUAL NETWORKING

On the final day, a social networking session was introduced to give delegates an opportunity to connect with one another in an informal setting. The platform Remo was used which enabled delegates to move around from table to table and share their virtual business cards.



## RESILIENT RIVERS BLUPRINT (RRBP) PRE-IRS WORKSHOP

Building on from the launch of the RRBP partners in 2019, this showcased seven river basins that have taken part in testing the RRBP self-assessment tools and through a facilitated discussion, openly discussed the issues, challenges and opportunities associated with these tools.



# KEYNOTES



**Carlos Manuel Rodríguez**

CEO & CHAIRPERSON - GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF)

The role of the Global Environment Facility in financing nature



**Sarangerel Davaajantsan**

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT & TOURISM OF MONGOLIA

Excellence - Collaboration - Integration: Valuing our rivers



**Philip Weller**

DANUBE WATER PROGRAM COORDINATOR - INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WATER SERVICE COMPANIES IN THE DANUBE RIVER CATCHMENT AREA (IAWD)

The call for a global political agenda to strengthen protection and restoration of rivers



**Stuart Bunn**

DIRECTOR - AUSTRALIAN RIVERS INSTITUTE

How much do we value our rivers and what will it take to save them?



**Joana Bacallo**

WATER STORYTELLER

If water is speech, river is their language: A success story of 'non-water' collaborators in the indigenous south of the Philippines



**James Bentley**

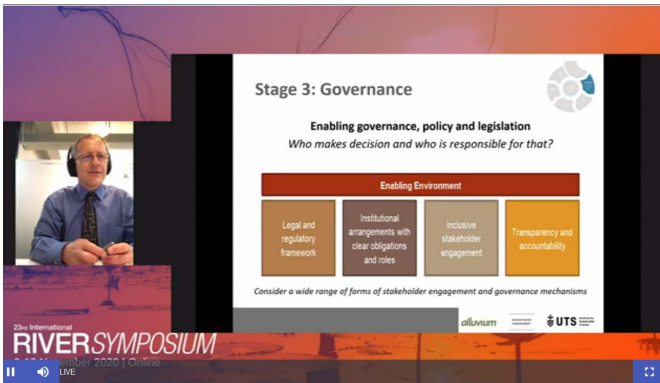
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, NATURAL VALUE AT NATIONAL AUSTRALIA BANK

Banking on river restoration



# Learn-Inspire-Transform

The Learn-Inspire-Transform (LIT) series of special sessions continued to be a popular way for delegates to be fully immersed in the program content and subthemes. More than 50% of the content this year was delivered in LIT sessions. The sessions were all well attended and generated interesting and profound conversations that have continued after *Riversymposium*.



## Australian Water Partnership

The Australian Water Partnership launched two reports: “The Basin Guide, a new guide to river basin planning” and the “Waterway Health Report Cards: an Australian perspective.”



## Resilient Rivers Blueprint: Rivers for Future Generations

The Resilient Rivers Blueprint (RRBP), a global platform to assess the river resilience and connect to other people on their river journeys to share knowledge and experience, was explored in this LIT session.



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

## Brisbane City Council: Unlocking financial mechanisms to leverage investment into Oxley Creek (Australia)

This LIT session discussed how to establish a diversified investment portfolio augmenting traditional financing and innovative financial instruments to catalyse new opportunities and revitalise Oxley Creek, a tributary of the Brisbane River



## River Basins of Asia

This LIT session explored the opportunities for green development and application of the Resilient Rivers Blueprint in large river basins in Asia. Three river basins shared the results of the initial self-assessment towards the resilience of their rivers. We also heard about challenges and opportunities faced by the Ravi River in Pakistan and Yellow River in China.

Other sessions included:

- Stories from Winners and Twinners
- Rivers on Fire
- COVID-19 & Rivers
- Emerging Water Professionals
- Your Next Steps: How to level up your communication and bring change to your river

# Save our Rivers Ball



The inaugural *Save our Rivers Ball* was held on the first evening of *Riversymposium*. With an invite-only guest list due to the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, the event was live streamed to delegates of the virtual IRS. The dinner featured Professor Stuart Bunn as the esteemed keynote speaker. The Island Hideaway Hula Dancers provided the live entertainment. Prof Peter Varghese AO and John McCarthy AO, co-chairs of the IRF's *RiverPatrons* Group, welcomed and farewelled the guests respectively. Councillor Fiona Cunningham, Chair of Brisbane's Environment, Parks and Sustainability Committee addressed the guests, on behalf of the Lord Mayor of Brisbane Adrian Schrinner, IRF's inaugural *RierPatron*. Jo Bacallo provided a powerful video appeal to save our rivers. Proceeds from the raffle and auction that evening will be used to provide capacity building to river basins in developing countries on their journey towards resilience-ensuring rivers for future generations. IRF acknowledges the contributions of our ten *RiverPatrons*, a passionate group of respected community leaders, Chief Executives and Chairs, all who support the restoration, protection and resilience of our world's rivers.





# Who attended?

# 309

Total Delegates



# 37%

Government

## Living Danube Partnership



- Cooperation between Business, NGOs, Governments
- Coca Cola, ICPDR and WWF
- Winner of the Reuters Responsible Business Awards 2020

# 24

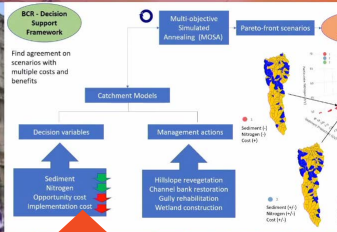
Countries



**CARLOS MANUEL RODRIGUEZ**  
CEO and Chairperson  
Global Environment Facility (GEF)

# 18%

NGO/Community



# 12%

Academia

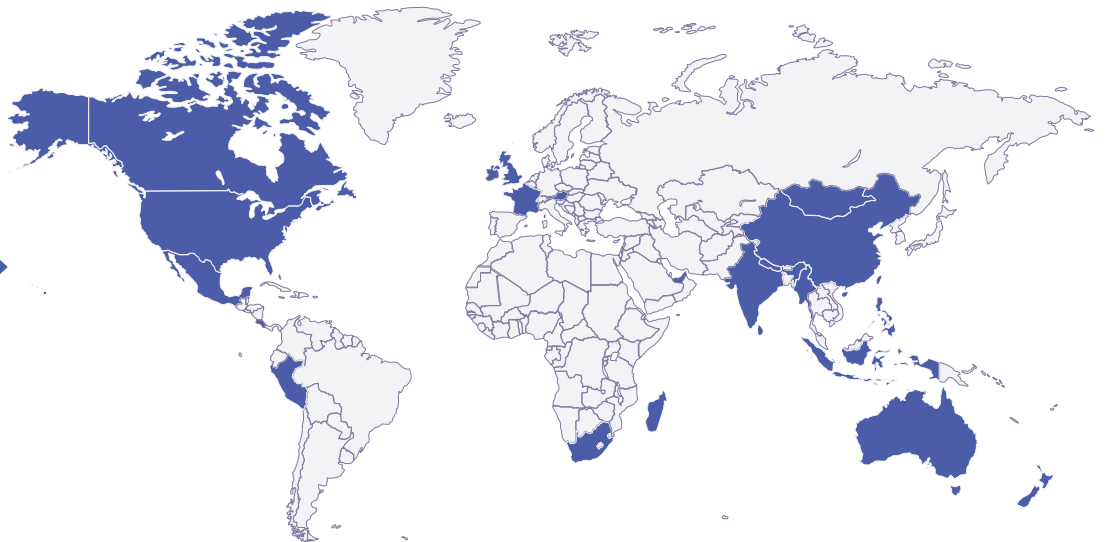
Strategic objective of GEF IW is to support foundational capacity building and portfolio learning

# 18%

Business/Industry



Represented Countries







Average rating by 23<sup>rd</sup> International  
*Riversymposium* delegates

# Testimonials

Allow me to express my gratitude to the International RiverFoundation and the International *Riversymposium* Committee for a great opportunity to join and to attend the whole symposium which was a fruitful one. This one was my second IRS, the first one was the 17<sup>th</sup> IRS in Canberra in 2014. I am looking forward to joining the IRS in Brisbane next year as I will be working a lot with River Basin Management.

***Reliana Lumban Toruan, Indonesia***

Congratulations for the Opening Day of the Symposium. Just finished watching the River Gala and a few of the sessions. My congratulations for the very good work to get an excellent online symposium convened.

***Philip Weller, Austria***

Congratulations on the IRS success. Due to the typhoon we could not attend the last session but look forward to the recordings.

***Ara Oredina, Philippines***

# Our Partners

## PLATINUM PARTNER



*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*

### Brisbane City Council

Brisbane is Australia's River City and home to more than one million people. Brisbane City Council is committed to finding ways to meet the city's growing need for water, air and energy resources in a region prone to drought and floods. *Brisbane. Clean,*

*Green, Sustainable 2017-2031* highlights key sustainability achievements and future targets to ensure a cleaner, greener and more resilient city.

[www.brisbane.qld.gov.au](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au)

## GOLD PARTNER

### Australian Water Partner

AWP is an Australian Government initiative helping developing countries primarily in the Indo-Pacific region work towards the sustainable management of their water resources. We enable this by facilitating collaboration between governments, international water agencies and organisations, and our 190+ public and private partners to share Australia's water sector expertise internationally.

[waterpartnership.org.au](http://waterpartnership.org.au)



## SILVER PARTNERS

### San Antonio River Authority

From downtown San Antonio to the Texas Coast, the San Antonio River Authority is dedicated to nurturing and protecting this amazing ecosystem. That's something we can all be proud of.

<https://www.sariverauthority.org>



### Asian Development Bank

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty.

<https://www.adb.org/>



## RIVEREXPO EXHIBITORS



### Healthy Rivers

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is responsible for ensuring that Western Australia's water resources and environment are healthy, and able to support a strong economy and thriving communities.

The department's Healthy Rivers Program conducts environmental monitoring and research to support management of our river ecosystems; to protect and improve the health of our rivers and the communities they support.

<https://rivers.dwer.wa.gov.au/>



Blue Heart  
SUNSHINE COAST

### Blue heart

The Blue Heart is an area of more than 5,000 hectares on a natural floodplain in the Maroochy River catchment. At its core is public land including council's Cooloom Creek Environment Reserve network, the Queensland Government's Cooloom Creek Conservation Park, and Unitywater's Yandina Creek Wetland.

<https://www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/blueheart>

## RESILIENT RIVERS BLUEPRINT FOUNDING PARTNERS



**Deloitte.**



Thank you for being a part of the 23rd International Riversymposium!



# Making it Happen

## IRF STAFF

Dr Eva Abal  
Jacqui Atique  
Kelly McMillan  
Sylvia Liu  
Marion Schembri  
Qing Ye (2019 Vera  
Thiess Fellow)

## IRF BOARD

Prof Paul Greenfield AO  
Martin Albrecht AC  
Dr Peter Rowley  
Prof Bill Dennison  
Anthony De Domenico  
John McCarthy AO  
Dr Selina Ward  
Philip Weller  
Wouter Lincklaen Arriëns

## VOLUNTEERS

Jian Zhou  
Shiyi Xu  
Anton Kang  
Jay Manoharan  
Yuhan Dong  
Hoiying Cheung  
Zerui Chen  
El Lee  
Tianyi Zhang



The International RiverFoundation's

## RiverPatrons GROUP

The *RiverPatrons* Group comprises a passionate group of respected community leaders, Chief Executives and Chairs from Australian and global organisations, all who support the restoration, protection and resilience of our rivers.

Our *RiverPatrons* champion our cause and understand the importance of the stewardship and nurturing healthy and resilient rivers now and for the future.





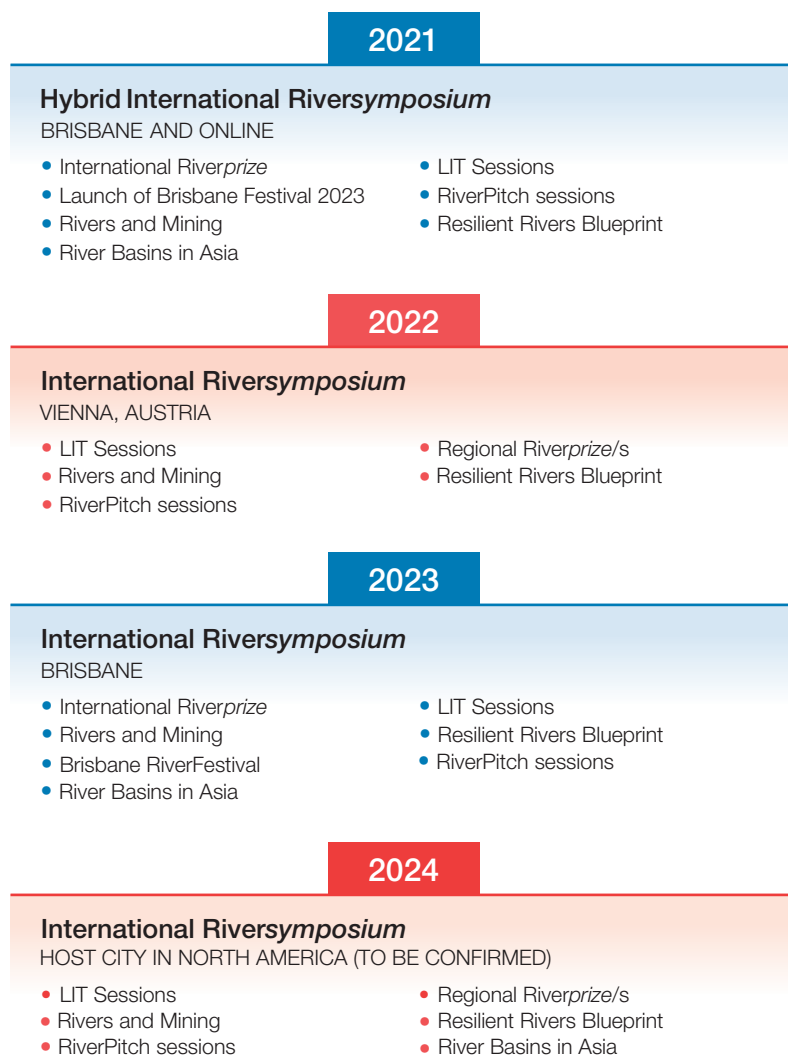
# Riversymposium:

A history of knowledge-sharing, celebration and inspiration

## The IRS Journey



## Future programs / opportunities



### Riversymposium location and cycle

■ BRISBANE once every 2 years ■ INTERNATIONAL once every 2 year



# What's next?

## Content Access

All registered delegates receive 6 months access to all of *Riversymposium's* content. This includes all presentations, *RiverExpo*, sponsorship page, virtual field trips, *RiverGallery*, *RiverFilms* and e-posters.

The video-on-demand access for the next six months enables delegates to take the time to explore content that they may not have had the chance to see during the actual event.

## Badges



All presenters and delegates would have already received their respective badges for taking part in the first ever virtual International *Riversymposium*. These micro-credentials contain verifiable content and can be shared on LinkedIn, electronic CV's or even email banners.

## RiverAcademy

Extend your knowledge further by gaining additional micro credentials and taking on more professional development opportunities by enrolling in a *RiverAcademy* course. The following courses are available for enrolment now and are taught by experts in their field from around the world.

- Leadership for River Practitioners - Dr Andre Taylor
- Science Communications - Prof Bill Dennison
- River Resilience - Prof Bill Dennison, Dr Eva Abal
- Clean Waters - Michael Curley
- River Restoration: Form and Function - Misko Ivezich

