



# RiverSmart Australia

## Who are we

RiverSmart is a not-for-profit community organisation committed to caring for and increasing awareness of the iconic Macquarie Marshes that lie within a 500km stretch of the Macquarie River near Dubbo, NSW. We do this through our cultural centre, Window on the Wetlands, plus all kinds of community-based activities (catch and release fishing competitions, art and movies by the river and the Macquarie River Trails initiative, [www.rivertrails.com.au](http://www.rivertrails.com.au)) in and around our town of Warren.

## What we needed

We wanted to create a self-guided audio tour to showcase the remarkable biodiversity of our local Tiger Bay marshes and encourage visitors to drive 130km further to experience the more permanent Macquarie Marshes – one of the most important inland RAMSAR listed waterbird breeding areas in Australia. The audio app had to complement Window on the Wetlands and help locals feel even more invested in the natural beauty of their area.

## How we got there

Our Telstra Connected Communities Grant gave our awesome audio artists greater scope to put in all kinds of technological ideas, plus heaps of heart and soul.

One clever idea was giving listeners the chance to hear plants photosynthesising and water flowing inside trees. To capture this, the artists put microphones in the water near reeds and against the trunks of trees. They also recorded many of the amazing range of bird calls, including the Whistling Kites that inhabit the trees around Tiger Bay.

The app features local stories about the potential origin of this unusual name, such as one about 'rivers running like a tiger' during floods and other more far-fetched folklore. Building the app on the [izi.travel](http://izi.travel) platform made it freely available to anyone, anywhere. It also enabled us to include additional information online that wasn't presented as audio content.

## Why it worked

What we wanted to achieve overall with the RiverSmart audio app was to help visitors tune in to the beauty of the natural world, especially aspects that may be less obvious to city people where disconnection from nature is more common.

Hearing the amazing mix of marshland sounds and fascinating facts during a visit really helped increase this connection. We know this from the enthusiastic responses of users visiting Tiger Bay and the Macquarie Marshes.

The health of Australia's inland rivers hangs in the balance. For example, plastic is as much of a problem in rivers as it is in the ocean, but fewer people know about it. Getting people excited about our waterways is the first step to them appreciating the fragility of this vast ecosystem and what they do to help. The success of the RiverSmart audio app goes a long way towards us achieving this ultimate goal.

## The Telstra Connected Communities Grant Program

The Telstra Connected Communities Grant Program Applications for the 2025 Telstra Connected Communities grant program open from 9am on Thursday 20th of February 2025 and will close at 5pm on Thursday 20th of March 2025. This round will make \$200,000 available for applications of up to \$10,000 each. Successful grants will be announced in June 2025 and successful applicants will have 12 months to complete funded projects.

Learn more about the 2025 Connected Communities grant round here

<https://frrr.org.au/funding/place/telstra-connected-communities-program/>