

PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT GROUP ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



Parramatta River
Catchment Group



LET'S MAKE OUR RIVER
SWIMMABLE AGAIN BY
2025

RECOGNITION OF THE RIVER'S TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways in the Parramatta River catchment and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We value and respect First Nations peoples continuing culture, beliefs, and relationship to Country and the important contribution they make to the life of this region.

This land is, was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

THE PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT GROUP

The Parramatta River Catchment Group is an alliance of councils, government agencies, and community groups that are working together to improve the health of the Parramatta River, its tributaries and surrounding environment.

In 2014, we launched the *Our Living River* initiative with a new vision, purpose, and mission:



OUR VISION

We believe Sydney deserves a world-class river.



OUR PURPOSE

To make Parramatta River a living river.



OUR MISSION

To make Parramatta River swimmable again by 2025.

In 2018, we released *DUBA, BUDU, BARRA: Ten Steps to a Living River* – the *Parramatta River Masterplan*, which addresses different aspects of ecological and waterway health, in areas such as stormwater management, litter prevention, water sensitive urban design, and land-use planning.

A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR



This year has been a pivotal one for the Parramatta River Catchment Group. In November, Bayview Park Baths at Concord opened after being closed for more than 50 years. Sydney Water also launched the Riverwatch™ monitoring program, providing water quality forecasting for Bayview Park and future sites on the river.

The Bayview Park opening marks a key milestone in the mission to make the Parramatta River swimmable again. It also highlights the significant amount of work that has been achieved to date to improve the health of the river.

Progress continues on the establishment of three more swimming and recreation sites in the next 12 months with the McIlwaine Park foreshore upgrade, expected to be completed by late 2023, and Bedlam Bay and Putney Park swim sites planned for 2024.

Another significant achievement this year was the successful submission by the PRCG to secure \$1.8 million in funding from the NSW Government as part of an election commitment to support two key Masterplan actions: stormwater compliance and education, and riverbank naturalisation and priority corridors.

Other Masterplan projects progressed this year include the program of source control works undertaken by Sydney Water on the wastewater network in the upper and mid Parramatta River catchments to reduce the impacts of wet weather overflows on the river and swimming sites.

Reducing source pollution that enters the river remains a key focus. The PRCG worked with Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG) to progress the Coastal Management Program and Litter Prevention Strategy for Greater Sydney Harbour.

PRCG is also partnering with SCCG, CSIRO, Sydney Olympic Park Authority and several Sydney councils on an innovative project that involves the installation of smart technology to help reduce stormwater pollution entering Sydney Harbour and improve the safety and maintenance of assets and operations staff.

The nationally recognised 'Get the Site Right' education and compliance campaign continued for its seventh year, supported by our member councils, catchment groups, NSW Environment Protection Authority, and Dept of Planning and Environment.

The four-year Landcare grant, which provided 60 per cent of the funding for the Local Landcare Coordinator/Riverkeeper role, ended in June 2023. Planning has

commenced for the next tranche of funding to support the Riverkeeper program that includes a wide range of education and community engagement events and activities.

A key event in the Riverkeeper program calendar is Riverfest, which was held for the first time from World Clean Up Day to World Rivers Day in September, and featured several in-person and online events.

Our efforts to facilitate First Nations cultural engagement with the Parramatta River progressed with the completion of the Designing with Country framework. The PRCG is partnering with City of Canada Bay on a joint cultural interpretation project as part of the Bayview Park upgrade. The framework will also be used to inform the riverbank naturalisation project.

In December, we said farewell to Nell Graham who was the Coordinator for the past three and a half years. During her time with the PRCG, Nell was instrumental in the delivery of several key Masterplan projects, including the Water Sensitive Urban Design audit, Designing with Country project, and Bayview Park swim site launch.

Nadia Young, who has held the communications role with the PRCG for the past six years, acted in the Coordinator's position from January and was appointed to the role in July 2023. Nadia has more than 30 years' experience in communications and stakeholder engagement across a range of fields, including waterway management, education, and health. We wish her well in the new role.

In mid-2023 work commenced on an organisational review that will inform the future administrative and strategic direction for the PRCG and next Masterplan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Vice Chair, Councillor Kathie Collins, for her contribution and support over the past year. I also thank Nerida Taylor and the Sydney Water Masterplan Delivery team for their considerable efforts and support of the PRCG.

Finally, I wish to thank the City of Canada Bay Council for hosting the PRCG, and all our partner agencies for their continued commitment. As we approach the 10th anniversary of the Our Living River mission in 2024, I look forward to what will be another significant year for the PRCG.

Cr Mark Drury
Parramatta River Catchment Group Chair

MASTERPLAN KEY OUTCOMES 2022-23



Life guards at Lake Parramatta

STEP 1: GET SWIMMING

- Planning and community engagement commenced on upgrades to **Lake Parramatta** to improve safety and accessibility, including concrete water access steps with handrail and tactile surface indicators, and a coarse river sand 'beach' for improved level water access.
- Upgrades to **Bayview Park**, Concord that include new accessible pathways and parking, picnic tables, and plantings. Progress of First Nations cultural interpretative works planned for late 2023.



Sydney Water monitoring team

STEP 2: KEEP WATCH

- Launch of the **Riverwatch™** monitoring program as part of the Bayview Park Baths opening.
- Water quality forecasting for Bayview Park is available on the Our Living River and Sydney Water websites.
- Ongoing regular monitoring of other planned swimming and recreation sites. L



Bayview Park swim site opening

STEP 3: CREATE NEW SWIMMING SPOTS

- Opening of **Bayview Park Baths**, Concord in November 2023.
- Progress of **Bedlam Bay** (Gladesville) and **Putney Park** (Putney) sites
- Inner West Council met with Greater Sydney Parklands to progress development of **Callan Point** swim site in Lilyfield.
- **Swim Site Activation Technical Working Group** (SSATWG) met regularly to progress site openings.



Camellia-Rosehill precinct artist's impression (source: NSW DPE)

STEP 4: STANDARDISE THE STANDARDS

- Sydney Water met with a key developer in the Camellia-Rosehill precinct in March to discuss partnering on a pilot project to apply the **Blue Green Index**.
- A workshop with the broader group of precinct stakeholders is planned for September 2023 to gauge their interest in partnering to strengthen stormwater controls in the development.



Site inspection, Inner West Council

STEP 5: REDUCE STORMWATER RUNOFF

- **\$800K in funding** was received from NSW Government to support the delivery of a 4-year Stormwater Compliance and Education program.
- **Smarter Cleaner Sydney Harbour project:** Joint agency project led by CSIRO, utilising and training smart technology to monitor stormwater pollution through gross pollutant trap sensors and stormwater channel cameras.
- **Get the Site Right** compliance campaign held in May and October. 20+ agencies; 1,479 sites inspected; 61% compliance; \$972,853 in fines.

MASTERPLAN KEY OUTCOMES 2022-23



Wastewater emergency relief structure

STEP 6: IMPROVE OVERFLOWS

- **Source control works program** completed by Sydney Water to June 2023 include: repairs to 200 emergency relief structures, 575 manholes, relining 17km of wastewater pipe, continuation of smoke testing program involving 6,660 properties.
- The program is part of a \$183 million package of work over 4 years across 5 catchments in Greater Sydney. The works have been agreed with the EPA and are regulated under Sydney Water's risk-based licence.



Foreshore clean-up, Ermington

STEP 7: INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY

- **20+** community engagement and citizen science events and activities
- **2,420+** participants
- **3** Riverkeeper Ambassadors
- **21** media items (print, online, radio)
- **2,809** social media followers; **8%** average engagement rate
- **980+** e-newsletter subscribers
- Our Living River website: **16,021** users, **36,392** page views.



Saltmarsh Tour, City of Canada Bay

STEP 8: BRING IN NATURE

- **\$1M in funding from NSW Government** to support the delivery of the 3-year Parramatta River Bank Naturalisation & Priority Corridor project.
- **Landcare NSW:** final year of the 4-year Landcare/Riverkeeper program, involving community engagement, environmental education and citizen science activities. An extension of funding to October 2023 was received.
- Progress of **Mcllwaine Park**, Rhodes foreshore upgrade, including beach, rock pools and saltmarsh area (expected completion date October 2023).



Parramatta River, Cabarita

STEP 9: REPORT BACK REGULARLY

- Completion of a PRCG member agency **satisfaction survey**.
- Planning commenced for an **organisational and strategic review** to ascertain the efficacy of existing roles, subcommittees, partnerships, resources and reporting, to support the delivery of Masterplan priority actions to 2025, and inform the future strategic direction of the PRCG to 2035.



Walk on Country, Blacktown Creek

STEP 10: CREATE CLEAR LEADERSHIP

- Completion of the **Designing with Country Aboriginal Design Framework**.
- Participation in the **Greater Sydney Water Quality and River Health Monitoring Governance Framework project**.
- Completion of Stage 2 of the **GSH Coastal Management Program**.
- Development of a litter prevention portal to support the **Greater Sydney Harbour Regional Litter Prevention Strategy**.

MASTERPLAN KEY ACTIONS 2023-24



Callan Point site artist's impression

SWIMMING AND RECREATION SITES (STEPS 1, 2, 3)

- Complete the McIlwaine Park foreshore upgrade in late 2023.
- Open Bedlam Bay and Putney Park swim sites in 2024.
- Progress plans to open a swim site at Callan Point, Lilyfield.
- Undertake Lake Parramatta swimming enclosure upgrades.
- Conduct ongoing water quality monitoring of swimming and recreation sites.



Litter trap, Parramatta River, Five Dock

STORMWATER COMPLIANCE AND EDUCATION PROGRAM (STEPS 5, 7)

- Work with member councils to audit private and publicly owned stormwater pollution control devices.
- Build capacity within councils to deliver their own stormwater education and compliance programs.
- Expand the reach and engagement of Get the Site Right campaign.
- Progress outcomes achieved through the GSH Litter Prevention Strategy to address litter issues and develop targeted litter prevention programs.



Powells Creek, North Strathfield

PARRAMATTA RIVER BANK NATURALISATION AND PRIORITY CORRIDORS PROJECT (STEPS 4, 8)

- Stage 1: Undertake a literature review and riparian catchment mapping, and identify preliminary priority sites for restoration. Develop riparian planning controls for councils (Feb-Jun 2024).
- Stage 2: Finalise planning policy and controls, confirm priority project sites, develop concept designs, and coordinate capital works approvals (Jul 2024 – Jun 2025).
- Stage 3: Undertake capital works at priority sites (Jul 2025 – Jun 2026).



Sustainability Fair, City of Ryde

LANDCARE PROGRAM (STEPS 7, 8)

- Commence 4-year Landcare NSW grant to fund the Local Landcare Coordinator/Riverkeeper role.
- Establish the Landcare/Parramatta River Catchment Local Landcare Group, chaired by Habitat Network and comprising environmental groups to build capacity, increase volunteers, and strengthen ties with councils.
- Deliver community engagement, environmental education and citizen science activities, including Riverfest.



Biodiversity & Education Subcommittee

PRCG STRATEGIC PLANNING (STEPS 9, 10)

- Complete the organisational and strategic review to identify priority actions for the PRCG to 2025, increase staff capacity and resourcing, and improve the efficacy of our partnerships and working groups.
- Commence planning for the next Masterplan to 2035.
- Progress First Nations community engagement and scope the viability of living entity status for the Parramatta River.
- Plan and run events to celebrate the 'Our Living River' 10th anniversary.

PRCG FINANCIAL REPORT



'Meet the Creek' event, Blacktown Creek, Riverfest 2022

INCOME	\$
Carryover – Membership fees	150,934
Carryover – Community Landcare mini grant (Citizen Science app)	2,723
Carryover – Metro Green Space Designing with Country grant	105,840
Carryover – Sydney Coastal Councils Group (Stream 1 Litter Prevention)	18,000
Annual Membership Contributions	335,724
2022-2023 Grant Funds (Local Landcare Coordinator)	53,915
Total Income	\$667,136

EXPENSES	\$
Salaries and on-costs	318,489
Materials	16,970
Riverkeeper Program	4,143
Contractors	6,920
Community Landcare mini grant (Citizen Science app)	1,127
Metro Green Space Designing with Country grant	69,345
NSW EPA Stream 1 Litter Prevention Grant	16,028
Total Expenses	\$433,023

NET OPERATING RESULT	\$234,112
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City of Canada Bay Council is holding the following cash on behalf of the PRCG:

Unspent Membership contributions	\$196,022
Community Landcare mini grant (Citizen Science app)	\$1,596
Metro Greenspace grant Designing with Country	\$36,495
NSW Dept of Planning (Water) – Parramatta River Masterplan funding	\$1,800,000

OUR THANKS



Rebecca Pickard (FoTC)
and Nell Graham (PRCG)



Spring Clean for the Shorebirds, Riverfest 2022



Dr Ricky Spencer (1M Turtles)

Thank you to all our members and supporters for their considerable efforts and commitment over the past year to make the Parramatta River swimmable again by 2025.

FINANCIAL MEMBERS



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS AND OTHER KEY CONTRIBUTORS





ourlivingriver.com.au