

PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



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 within the Parramatta River catchment and extend our deepest respects to their Elders, both past and present.

We recognise and honour the rich and enduring cultures, beliefs, and traditions of First Nations peoples, who have maintained a profound connection to Country for thousands of years. Their knowledge and wisdom are invaluable to improving the health of this land and its waterways.

We celebrate the ongoing contributions of First Nations communities to the cultural and social fabric of our region. Their insights and practices play a crucial role in enhancing our understanding of sustainability and environmental stewardship.

This land is, was, and always will be Aboriginal land. We are committed to fostering respectful relationships that honour this legacy and support the ongoing vitality of First Nations cultures.

Illustrations created by Leanne Watson Redpath



THE PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT GROUP

The Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) is a member-based alliance of local and state government agencies and community groups that are collaborating to restore the health of the Parramatta River and create vibrant, natural spaces for the community and wildlife to thrive.

The 'Our Living River' initiative, launched in 2014, established a new vision, purpose and mission:

- We believe Sydney deserves a world-class river
- To make Parramatta River a living river
- To make Parramatta River swimmable by 2025.

In 2018 we released *DUBA, BUDU, BARRA: Ten Steps to a Living River – the Parramatta River Masterplan*. This 10-step plan outlines the actions needed to improve the waterway and ecological health of the river catchment, focusing on stormwater management, community engagement, litter prevention, water-sensitive urban design, and land-use planning. The plan also seeks to raise awareness of First Nations history and culture, incorporate traditional knowledge into planning, and strengthen leadership in catchment management.

FINANCIAL MEMBERS



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS AND OTHER KEY CONTRIBUTORS



REFLECTIONS FROM THE PRCG CHAIR



Over the past year, the Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) has made significant progress in enhancing the health of the Parramatta River. The financial year commenced with two major Masterplan projects, supported by \$1.8 million in funding from the NSW Government. The first, led by Angela Dunnett, focuses on stormwater compliance and education to improve community understanding of effective stormwater management. The second aims to map the catchment to identify and enhance selected creeks to improve waterway health.

In November 2023, the City of Canada Bay launched the \$8.7 million Mcllwaine Park foreshore upgrade. Additionally, plans are underway to activate swim sites at Bedlam Bay and Putney Park, expected to open in late 2024. Inner West Council is also progressing plans for a potential swim site at Callan Park while exploring options for Mort Bay in Birchgrove.

Key initiatives this year included a comprehensive Organisational and Strategic Review to guide the PRCG's future, the Smarter Cleaner Sydney Harbour project, and a report on the First Nations Peoples of the Parramatta River to support the Designing with Country Framework. A communication strategy was developed to raise awareness about swimming risks in areas affected by legacy chemical contamination.

We celebrated the 10th anniversary of the 'Our Living River' mission with a community day at Bayview Park in March, bringing together member agencies and supporters to acknowledge our achievements.

From left: Leanne Niblock (Sydney Water), Jasmine Payget (PRCG), Nerida Taylor (Sydney Water), Cr Mark Drury, and Nadia Young (PRCG) at the Mcllwaine Park Foreshore Upgrade launch).

In May, we hosted a boat trip for members of parliament, councillors, and executive council staff to showcase existing and planned swim sites.

The Riverkeeper program, supported by Greater Sydney Landcare through the NSW Landcare Enabling Program, will continue for another four years. The establishment of the Parramatta River and Waterways Network (PRAWN) will strengthen engagement with local environmental groups. The ongoing 'Get the Site Right' campaign continues to improve compliance on building sites across NSW, and Sydney Water has advanced its \$91 million investment in wastewater infrastructure works in the mid to upper Parramatta River catchment.

In June, the PRCG joined Sydney Water and over 30 signatories from 16 countries to sign the first Swimmable Cities Charter, committing to revitalising urban rivers.



As the financial year concludes, we acknowledge several administrative changes: the City of Canada Bay completes its five-year term as host, and we welcome Inner West Council as the new host. We thank retiring Riverkeeper Jasmine Payment and Coordinator Nadia Young, who is stepping back, for their dedicated service during this pivotal time.

This report marks my final contribution as Chair of the PRCG. Over the past decade, I have witnessed substantial improvements in river health and community engagement. I extend my gratitude to Vice Chair Cr Kellie Darley and all PRCG members for their support, and I look forward to celebrating the opening of our next swim site on the river.

Councillor Mark Drury
Chair, Parramatta River Catchment Group

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2023-24



Mcllwaine Park foreshore upgrade launch



\$1.8 million in funding for two key Masterplan projects



Get the Site Right May 2024 Blitz 5% improvement in compliance



25+ community and stakeholder engagement events



Our Living River 10th Anniversary celebrations



City of Canada Bay completes its five-year term as PRCG host

ORGANISATIONAL AND STRATEGIC REVIEW

In 2023, the PRCG initiated an organisational and strategic review to enhance its effectiveness. The review aimed to identify key priorities, optimise resources, streamline reporting, update governance documents, and define a new strategic direction.

After an initial online survey with PRCG member agencies, a consultant was engaged to conduct a comprehensive review, analysing key planning documents and facilitating 26 in-person activities, including stakeholder interviews, meeting observations, and Senior Leadership Team workshops, to gather a diverse range of insights.

The review identified several areas for improvement:

Strategic focus: Clarify core priorities and streamline activities for better workload management and impact.

Delivery approach: Establish a clear delivery model to enhance accountability and project management efficiency.

Stakeholder engagement: Broaden outreach to new stakeholders for improved recreational and environmental outcomes.

Resource management: Address resource constraints to optimise capacity and seize opportunities.

Staff stability: Improve workforce stability to enhance continuity and accountability.

The review also revealed several opportunities for growth:

Formalise member agency roles: Recognise PRCG member agency actions that contribute to the Masterplan delivery to boost accountability and engagement.

Strengthen Executive engagement: Involve Executive staff from PRCG member agencies to reinforce commitment to the mission.

Expand focus: Broaden the scope beyond swimming to attract new stakeholders and enhance impact.

Recommendations

To address the identified issues and capitalise on opportunities, the review proposed the following:

1. Strategic planning: Develop a new Strategic Plan focused on three core priorities: Connect, Champion, and Lead, supported by a draft 'Plan on a Page' to guide immediate actions.

NEW STRATEGIC PLAN



Connect
(Facilitate collaboration)



Champion
(Advocate for the river)



Lead
(Drive outcomes)

2. Delivery model: Establish a 'Delivery Partner Model' to formalise roles and improve accountability and resource allocation.

3. Organisational structure: Update the structure to clarify key success layers, including partnership, strategy, direction, delivery, and reporting.

4. Strategic leadership: Establish a new Executive Leadership Team of member agency CEOs and Directors to strengthen engagement.

5. Reporting and measurement: Create clear performance metrics to enhance accountability and track progress through a defined reporting structure.

6. Other recommendations: Update key documents such as the Memorandum of Understanding and Terms of Reference to clarify roles and responsibilities and reaffirm member agency commitment.



Parramatta River Masterplan

The review also evaluated the current Masterplan (2018 -2025) and proposed recommendations for the development of the next Masterplan to 2030:

Streamline reporting: Define performance metrics for each Masterplan step and create a tracking sheet for Masterplan actions to enhance reporting and future planning.

Increase visibility: Revise the Our Living River website Dashboard to improve clarity on project delivery, incorporating data visualisations and a one-page 'Step Tracker' for quick performance overviews.

Review steps: Evaluate the current Masterplan 10 steps for possible merging or reduction while ensuring all necessary actions are covered.

Aspirational outcomes: Maintain ambitious goals such as making the Parramatta River swimmable to sustain interest, developing social and recreational goals, as well as focusing on sporting events to drive local engagement.

Unique narrative: Promote the PRCG as Australia's most successful urban waterway partnership to leverage its impactful approach.

Acknowledge contributions: Highlight the roles and achievements of all stakeholders to boost action and momentum.

Member alignment: Strengthen connections and accountability among member agencies to foster collaboration and ensure shared responsibility for achieving common goals.

Engage new members: Use the development of the next Masterplan to engage with diverse stakeholders such as NSW Transport, NSW Health, and local sports organisations.

Several emerging themes were identified for possible inclusion in the next Masterplan:

River identity: Create a unique identity for the River and its catchment.

First Nations connections: Strengthen ties to First Nations culture and communities.

Swimming support: Maintain active support for new swimming sites.

Expanded recreation and connectivity: Increase inclusive, water-based activities and develop more walking and cycling paths throughout the catchment.

Sporting events: Attract stakeholders for major river events to enhance investment.

Biodiversity: Improve coordination for more nature conservation efforts.

Resilience communication: Promote resilience initiatives in response to climate challenges.

Next steps

The PRCG Full Group endorsed the following actions at the June 2024 meeting:

- Implement the interim strategic 'Plan on a Page' until the end of 2025 and create a new strategic plan to align with the 2026 Masterplan launch.
- Review PRCG position descriptions to enhance team capacity.
- Develop a new reporting framework to track Masterplan progress and capture member agency activities that contribute to improved waterway health.
- Invite PRCG member agencies to sign the updated Memorandum of Understanding and Terms of Reference in early 2025.

KEY PROJECTS, CAMPAIGNS, AND EVENTS

Parramatta River Bank Naturalisation and Planning of Priority Corridors project

The Parramatta River Bank Naturalisation and Planning of Priority Corridors project is a three-year, \$1 million funded initiative aimed at enhancing riparian areas in the Parramatta River catchment. Its goals include developing policies to protect existing vegetation, identifying priority revegetation sites, and implementing on-ground works.

The project consists of three stages:

1. Catchment mapping to identify preliminary restoration sites (July 2023 - June 2024);
2. Site selection and concept design (July 2024 - June 2025); and
3. Capital works (July 2025 - June 2026).

The geographic scope of the project includes riparian areas within the 10-member council Local Government Areas and targets lower-order streams while excluding the Parramatta River bank from Charles Street Weir to Cockatoo Island. The project builds on recommendations from the *Strategic and Statutory Planning Review to create Our Living River*, released in 2021.

A project working group comprising member agency officers was established by the Riverkeeper with support from Sydney Water to oversee the initiative. Civile Consulting was engaged to conduct catchment mapping, identify preliminary restoration sites, and develop a prioritisation framework for future site selection.

Stage 2 will commence in late 2024, and a part-time project officer will be recruited to manage the remaining stages. The project offers councils a unique opportunity to identify and plan restoration works for future grant funding.

Stormwater Compliance and Education Program

The Stormwater Compliance and Education program is a four-year, \$800,000 funded initiative launched in July 2023 to improve stormwater management and reduce pollution in the Parramatta River.

This program supports the Parramatta River Masterplan's goal of making the river swimmable by tackling stormwater pollution through enhanced education and compliance, capacity building for partner agencies, and increased community engagement via campaigns such as 'Get the Site Right' and 'Love Your Waterways'.

Key activities this year included surveying councils to assess stormwater compliance and education needs, hosting a workshop on stormwater asset maintenance, and attending the franc.sydney Stormwater NSW Conference to present on the work achieved to date to improve catchment health.



PRCG Stormwater Compliance and Education Officer Angela Dunnett talks to an attendee at the franc.sydney Conference.

Two Get the Site Right inspection 'blitzes' were held this year (see full report next page), and the PRCG re-established its ties with the NSW Master Builders Association to explore education opportunities for its members.

The PRCG joined AELERT (Australasian Environmental Law Enforcement and Regulators Network) to share compliance resources and is collaborating with the NSW EPA on an Own It and Act grant to develop a catchment-wide litter prevention program.

The next 12 months will focus on establishing a central data repository to track progress and share information on catchment activities, as well as improving educational materials.



Council and EPA regulatory staff conduct a site inspection

Get the Site Right campaign

The 'Get the Site Right' campaign aims to reduce sediment laden runoff in waterways by improving erosion and sediment control compliance on construction sites across NSW.

Jointly run by the Parramatta River Catchment Group, Cooks River Alliance, Georges Riverkeeper, Sydney Coastal Councils Group, WaterNSW, and the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), the campaign involves two inspection 'blitzes' each year, in May and October, where councils and the EPA conduct site inspections and take regulatory action as needed.

In the October 2023 blitz, nearly 70% of sites were compliant after a second inspection, marking a 6% increase since May 2023. Compliance also improved by 18% between the first and second inspections. Councils issued 66 penalty notices totalling \$314,824 for violations such as poorly stabilised access points and inadequate sediment controls.

In the May 2024 campaign, compliance rates rose by a further 5% from October 2023, with nearly 72% of sites meeting standards after a second inspection. A 46% increase in compliance between the first and second visits emphasises the effectiveness of regular monitoring and education.

Councils issued over 100 penalty notices totalling \$404,780, nearly \$90,000 more than in October, due to increased fines under the Protection of the Environment Operations (POEO) Act for offences such as inadequate sediment fences and unprotected stockpiles.



Example of building waste not securely stored

With more than 20 councils now regularly taking part in Get the Site Right, a memorandum of understanding is being developed to formalise involvement and improve reporting. In 2025, the campaign periods will change to better align with other council inspection schedules. Educational materials will also be updated and translated into different languages to increase awareness and encourage compliance.

GET THE SITE RIGHT Combined campaign results



2300+
Sites inspected



71%
Compliance rate (May 2024)



\$719,604
Fines issued



Smarter Cleaner Sydney Harbour project

The PRCG collaborated with the Sydney Coastal Councils Group, CSIRO, and the Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA) on a project testing SMART technology to reduce stormwater pollution entering Sydney Harbour and enhance asset maintenance and safety.

The trial used waterway cameras, analysed by AI, to capture litter data; low-cost sensors in Gross Pollutant Traps (GPTs) to monitor pollutants; and a decision support tool to optimise cleaning schedules.

Six agencies participated in the trial: Blacktown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Parramatta, Northern Beaches, Woollahra, and SOPA. From July to October 2023, 36 cameras recorded nearly 12 terabytes of video, identifying 24 litter categories, mainly plastic and polystyrene.

Connection issues with 21 LoRaWAN sensors prompted the use of 16 4G sensors, which indicated increasing GPT fullness.

The trial concluded in late 2023, with CSIRO exploring larger trials elsewhere in Australia. The project was funded by the NSW Digital Restart Fund as part of the NSW Smart Places Acceleration Program.

Image (Top): Jasmine Payget (PRCG), Whitney-May Lever (Inner West Council), and Ana Terrazas (Sydney Coastal Councils Group) promote the Smarter Cleaner Sydney Harbour project at Sydney Water's Tech Demo Showcase.

Image (Right): Julia Strykowski (Friends of Toongabbie Creek), Uncle Chris Tobin, Charlene Bordley (Addventageous), Jasmine Payget (PRCG), Swapan Paul (SOPA), and Nadia Young (PRCG) at the Parramatta/Burrumbidgee River Symposium.

The City, the River and the Museum Symposium

In November 2023, the PRCG took part in 'The City, the River and the Museum: Ways of Knowing the Parramatta/Burrumbidgee River' symposium organised by Western Sydney University and Powerhouse.

The event brought together a wide range of stakeholders to explore the significance of the river in Parramatta's growing role as the Central River City in Greater Sydney.

A key outcome of the event was a publication of edited versions of the symposium presentations, featuring an overview from the Riverkeeper on the PRCG's efforts to enhance catchment health and reintroduce swimming in the river.



Coastal Management Program

The Parramatta River Catchment Group is developing a Coastal Management Program (CMP) for the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers.

In 2020, the PRCG partnered with the Sydney Coastal Councils Group on a CMP for Greater Sydney Harbour, involving 20 councils to address issues such as catchment runoff, population growth, and climate change.

Stage 2 was completed in September 2022, with a grant application submitted for Stage 3, but progress stalled due to funding issues. In mid-2023, the SCCG proposed splitting the CMP into 'outer' and 'inner' harbour plans as a scaled-back initiative.

In response, the PRCG invited member councils to participate in an inner harbour CMP with four councils currently agreeing to participate. A program steering group will be established by the end of 2024 with the PRCG providing support during the initial phases.



Designing with Country

Bayview Park upgrades

In September 2023, Bayview Park received \$280,000 in upgrades, funded by the NSW Government and the City of Canada Bay. The park, which borders the swimming baths that opened in 2022, was enhanced with three new picnic shelters, improved landscaping, and accessible pathways and parking.

The PRCG collaborated with Council and Dharug artist Leanne Watson to design the picnic shelter panels that reflect the area's biodiversity and its First Nations and colonial cultural significance.

In January 2024, two 'pebble seats' featuring the artist's work were installed, funded by PRCG as part of the Designing with Country Framework project.

Bayview Park was selected as one of eight pilot sites for the framework, developed by the PRCG in 2022. This initiative aims to help councils integrate First Nations cultural knowledge into public works planning, strengthening the community's connection to Country.

First Nations Peoples of the Parramatta River and surrounding region

In November 2023, the PRCG published a research document titled *First Nations Peoples of the Parramatta River and Surrounding Region*. The publication was created to support the Designing with Country Framework and serve as an educational resource for the community.



The document explores First Nations peoples' deep and enduring ties to Country and the lasting impact of colonisation on their traditional lands, languages, cultural practices, and communities. By addressing these issues, the PRCG seeks to contribute to truth-telling to foster a deeper understanding and respect for First Nations peoples.

PARRAMATTA RIVER MASTERPLAN UPDATE

STEP 1: GET SWIMMING

This step focuses on maintaining, enhancing, and promoting existing swimming spots on the Parramatta River.

City of Parramatta commenced work on significant improvements to Lake Parramatta, funded by a \$905,000 grant from the NSW Government's Places to Swim Program. Upgrades include a gently sloping entrance, handrails, a new lifeguard viewing platform, seating, and landscaping. Work began in April 2024 and is expected to finish ahead of the summer swim season. A Review of Environmental Factors was open for public feedback.

In September 2023, Bayview Park received \$280,000 in upgrades funded by the NSW Government and the City of Canada Bay. Improvements include three new picnic shelters, landscaping, and accessible pathways and parking.

STEP 2: KEEP WATCH

The aim of this step is to implement a comprehensive water quality monitoring program to ensure the safety and swimmability of the Parramatta River.

Sydney Water continued its RiverWatch™ monitoring program to evaluate the swimmability of existing and new swim sites using Bayesian network models to predict water quality. The predictive model for Putney Park was completed this year, while the Bedlam Bay model is still under development and is expected to be finalised before the site opens.

The PRCG engaged risk communications consultant ECF to develop a strategy for communicating the risks of swimming in areas with legacy chemical contamination. This work

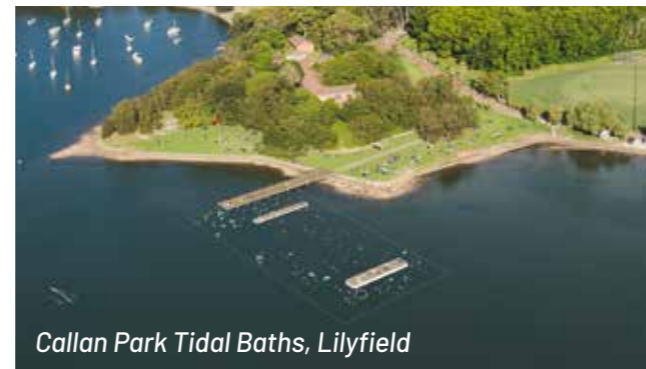
will guide Our Living River website content and proposed signage at swim sites.

The information offers clear explanations of past land use, assessed risks, and assessment results, which indicate that legacy contamination does not pose a health risk to swimmers at these sites.

STEP 3: CREATE NEW SWIM SITES

This step focuses on expanding the number of designated swimming areas along the Parramatta River to enhance community recreational opportunities. Efforts are underway to activate swim sites at Bedlam Bay in Gladesville and Putney Park. Construction is scheduled to start in the second half of 2024, with both sites expected to open for the 2024-25 swim season. The projects are part-funded by the NSW Government's 'Places to Swim' program and respective local councils.

Inner West Council progressed plans for the Callan Park Tidal Baths in Lilyfield, undertaking community engagement to seek feedback on the design, amenities, and impact on the river. The council is also exploring options for a new swim site at Mort Bay in Birchgrove.



Callan Park Tidal Baths, Lilyfield

STEP 4: STANDARDISE THE STANDARDS

Step 4 aims to establish consistent land-use policies and planning mechanisms across the entire Parramatta River catchment. Over the past year, Sydney Water has been working on efforts to broaden the scope of the Blue Green Index pilot project in the Camellia-Rosehill precinct to include multiple stakeholders rather than focusing on a single developer.

Sydney Water is engaging with Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, supported by the City of Parramatta, to ensure the outcomes are integrated into the precinct planning work and broader programs relating to green and blue infrastructure.



Mcllwaine Park Foreshore Upgrade

In November 2023, the City of Canada Bay launched the Mcllwaine Park foreshore upgrade, officially opened by Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and Public Spaces, Steven Bali MP, and Councillor Anthony Pezzini.

Over 700 guests celebrated with live music, children's entertainment, and a free barbecue. The PRCG supported the event, demonstrating a catchment model to illustrate the effects of stormwater runoff on our waterways.

Funded by the NSW Government and the City of Canada Bay, the \$8.7 million upgrade revitalises the foreshore park and enhances recreational access to the Parramatta River.



Key features include discovery rockpools, Living Seawall tiles for marine habitat, saltmarsh conservation area, accessible foreshore pathway, beach area, picnic shelters, and improved landscaping.

STEP 5: REDUCE STORMWATER RUNOFF

This step focuses on minimising the negative impacts of stormwater on the health and swimmability of the Parramatta River.

Efforts to progress this step expanded with the establishment of the Stormwater Compliance and Education Program. This initiative aims to support councils in improving maintenance and compliance of stormwater pollution control devices, develop targeted litter prevention strategies, and expand the 'Get the Site Right' campaign with a dedicated full-time officer.

Key activities this year included conducting a council survey to identify stormwater compliance and education needs, hosting a stormwater asset maintenance workshop, and presenting on the

ten-year Our Living River mission at the franc. sydney Stormwater NSW Conference. Two Get the Site campaigns were held, and a memorandum of understanding was initiated to formalise participation. The PRCG also consulted the NSW EPA about an Own It and Act grant for a catchment-wide litter prevention program and joined AELERT (Australasian Environmental Law Enforcement and Regulators neTwork) to share compliance resources.

STEP 6: IMPROVE OVERFLOWS

The aim of this step is to ensure that wastewater overflows meet the licensing conditions set by the NSW EPA. Sydney Water is actively progressing its source control program in the upper and mid Parramatta River catchments to mitigate the

impacts of wet weather overflows on the river and swimming sites.

Stage 1, which involved repairs to manholes and emergency relief structures, has been successfully completed, with a benefits assessment now finalised. In Stage 2, 17 km of pipes have been relined, and this will be assessed alongside Stage 3, which focuses on rectifying illegal sewer connections.

Currently, rectification works in the upper catchment are underway and are expected to be completed by May 2024. In the mid-catchment, repairs are on track for completion by July 2024, with significant progress made on both minor and major repairs. The entire program under Step 6, including benefits assessments for Stages 2 and 3, is on schedule to be finalised by the end of 2024.



STEP 7: INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY

This step focuses on encouraging community engagement in activities aimed at reducing pollution and improving the health of the Parramatta River.

This year's Riverfest featured a range of activities, including litter clean-ups, a dragon boating open day, and tour of the new Milson Park Wetland. In November 2023, we launched the 'Reduce Your Rubbish' online litter prevention campaign in collaboration with other catchment groups.

Additionally, we supported community events such as Inner West Council's Footprints Eco Festival, City of Ryde's Sustainability Day, World Environment Day, and Plastic Free July, promoting environmental awareness throughout the region.

STEP 8: BRING IN NATURE

Step 8 aims to restore and enhance biodiversity in the Parramatta River catchment, using the river's five iconic species as indicators of the area's overall health.

A key achievement this year was the extension of the NSW Landcare Enabling Program to 2027, which funds the Local Land Coordinator/Riverkeeper position. This role facilitates collaboration and supports initiatives that boost community engagement, enhance biodiversity, and improve waterway health.

The Biodiversity and Education Subcommittee, made up of PRCG member council and agency



staff, met multiple times this year to focus on various citizen science programs, including engaging corporate volunteers and leveraging social enterprises to promote participation.

Citizen science events included a bus tour of coastal saltmarsh ecosystems, microbat monitoring, and field trips to the new Milson Park Wetland. Additionally, the PRCG's annual Riverfest emphasised biodiversity and provided opportunities for the community to learn about and participate in habitat restoration projects.

A significant outcome was the establishment of PRAWN (Parramatta River and Waterways Network), a forum that connects environmental community groups to share knowledge and expand their community engagement.

STEP 9: REPORT BACK REGULARLY

This step focuses on creating clear communication channels to inform stakeholders and the community about the Masterplan's progress. The PRCG provides quarterly updates to the Full Group and shares information through the Dashboard on the Our Living River website. It also publishes an annual report and bi-monthly newsletters, along with regular updates on its social media platforms. Additionally, the Riverkeeper submits monthly reports on Landcare-funded activities to the Greater Sydney Landcare Network, as well as regular financial and technical reports to the Landcare funding body.

Images: (Left) Volunteers clean up the mangroves at George Kendall Riverside Park; (Top) PRCG Riverkeeper Jasmine Payget at the Inner West Council's Footprints EcoFestival.

STEP 10: CREATE CLEAR LEADERSHIP

The aim of this step is to provide strong leadership and advocate for coordinated waterway management. Key actions this year included the completion of the PRCG organisational and strategic review, identifying challenges and opportunities to inform the next Masterplan and future direction.

Planning commenced on a Coastal Management Program (CMP) for the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers, following the division of the Greater Sydney Harbour CMP into outer and inner harbor CMPs.

The PRCG published *First Nations Peoples of the Parramatta River and Surrounding Region* to support the Designing with Country Framework and promote First Nations history and culture.

The PRCG was invited to join the Parramatta River Parklands Network, established by the City of Parramatta to foster cross-agency collaboration and advance the Council's Parramatta River Vision.

The PRCG also participated in workshops hosted by Business Western Sydney, advocating for a unified approach to waterway management and improved accessibility and recreational opportunities.

To cap off the year, the PRCG and Sydney Water signed the inaugural International Swimmable Cities Charter ahead of the Paris Olympics, committing to urban swimming and waterfront revitalisation.



Reduce Your Rubbish Campaign









The 'Reduce Your Rubbish' campaign, part of the 'Love Your Waterways' initiative, aims to raise awareness of litter's impact on waterways and promote sustainable practices.

The campaign encourages five key actions to minimise waste, such as proper litter disposal, reducing single-use plastics, and opting for reusable items.

Launched in partnership with the Cooks River Alliance, Georges Riverkeeper, and Sydney Coastal Councils Group, the campaign ran in late 2023 to increase awareness ahead of the festive season.

Campaign materials are featured at litter clean-ups and community events, including a planning checklist for the 'Party without Plastic' action.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

-  25+ community and stakeholder events
-  10 media items
-  2,989 followers across social media channels; 33 posts/tweets per month (averaged); 9.6% average engagement rate per post
-  800+ e-newsletter subscribers
-  Our Living River website: 53,694 page views and 11,175 sessions by 17,000 users
-  262 Riverkeeper Network Facebook followers
-  3 Riverkeeper Ambassadors
-  14 Associate Organisations

TEN YEARS OF OUR LIVING RIVER



'Our Living River' mission to make the Parramatta River swimmable again by 2025 launched.



Parramatta River Masterplan: *Duba, Budu, Barra - Ten Steps to a Living River* released.
Finalist in the 2018 Australasian Riverprize for the Masterplan.



Bayview Park Baths launched - first swim site on the river to open in over 50 years.
Greater Sydney Harbour Regional Litter Prevention Strategy released.
Designing with Country Framework released.



Bedlam Bay and Putney Park swim sites planned to open.
Sydney Water completes the \$91.6 million wastewater source control program in the upper and mid Parramatta River catchment.



'Get the Site Right' compliance and education campaign launched.
Riverkeeper Program established, funded by NSW Government and supported Local Land Services and Landcare NSW.

RiverWatch™ water quality monitoring program established by Sydney Water.
Bedlam Bay announced as potential swim site by Hunter's Hill Council.



Lake Parramatta swim site re-opened to the public after being closed for more than 70 years.



Sydney Water Delivery Engine established.
Winner of 2019 Stormwater NSW Awards Planning Category.



Planning Reforms to Create Our Living River recommendations paper for the Masterplan Step 4 - Standardise the Standards released.

Winner of 2021 Stormwater National Award for Excellence in Strategic or Master Planning.

Inaugural Changemakers Course for the Parramatta River held.

PRCG and SCCG commenced work on the Greater Sydney Harbour Coastal Management Program.



\$1.8 million in funding received from NSW Government to deliver two key Masterplan actions: Stormwater Compliance and Education; and Bank Naturalisation and Planning of Priority Corridors.

Mcllwaine Park foreshore upgrade launched.

First Nations of the Parramatta River and surrounding region published.



Masterplan development progressed, including stakeholder engagement and the creation of the Swim Site Activation Framework.

Get the Site Right campaign expanded across Greater Sydney and parts of NSW.



Our Living River 10th Anniversary celebrations

The Parramatta River Catchment Group marked the 10th anniversary of the Our Living River mission to make the Parramatta River swimmable again with two key events.

Community Day at Bayview Park

More than 300 community members gathered at Bayview Park, Concord, on 24 March, for a day of swimming, food, entertainment, and festivities. Co-hosted by the PRCG and the City of Canada Bay, the event showcased the newest swim site to open on the river, reflecting a decade of efforts to restore parts of the Parramatta River to swimmable condition.

The event included a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony led by Raymond Weatherall from the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. Key speakers included Federal Member for Bennelong and former PRCG Chair, Jerome Laxale MP, and City of Canada Bay Mayor, Michael Megna. PRCG Chair Councillor Mark Drury emphasised the importance of our member agencies' continued commitment and collaboration over the past 10 years.

Attendees enjoyed environmental education stalls hosted by various member agencies and community groups, along with a variety of live entertainment and a free barbecue.

Parramatta River Boat Tour

On 2 May, the PRCG and Sydney Water hosted a boat tour of the Parramatta River, attended by government representatives, council staff, and community stakeholders. The tour showcased current and planned swim spots, with insights from Sydney Water's Paul Higham on investments in wastewater management and swim site activation.

Fiona Morrison, Commissioner for Open Space at the Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure (DPHI), highlighted the success of the Places to Swim program and the PRCG's advocacy for the Parramatta River.

These events reflected the importance of partnerships in enhancing the river's health and creating vibrant community spaces.

Bayview Park Community Day celebration:

1. PRCG member agency representatives; 2. City of Canada Bay Mayor, Michael Megna, and PRCG Chair Councillor Mark Drury emphasise the importance of collaboration to create vibrant natural recreational spaces for the community; 3. Children head to the river for a dip; 4. Australian Environmental Education's Karen Player talks about the importance of biodiversity; 5. Free river kayaking.

Parramatta River Boat Tour: 6. Boat Tour attendees; 7. Fiona Morrison, Commissioner, Open Space, DPHI, speaks about the Places to Swim program's success; 8. City of Ryde's Kylie McMahon talks about the Putney Park swim site's progress; 9. PRCG member agency representatives, past and present.

LANDCARE/ RIVERKEEPER PROGRAM

The Riverkeeper Program is funded by the NSW Landcare Enabling Program, managed by Greater Sydney Landcare. The new funding period runs from February 2024 to June 2027. This grant supports the Local Landcare Coordinator/ Riverkeeper position, which connects Landcare, the PRCG, and the community, to deliver initiatives that progress the Parramatta River Masterplan.

This year, the Riverkeeper Program supported a diverse range of activities and events:

Greater Sydney Landcare Annual General Meeting

This year's Greater Sydney Landcare Annual General Meeting was held at the Sydney Olympic Park Education Centre, attended by more than 50 representatives from partner organisations. Presentations included Dr Sebastian Pfautsch from Western Sydney University on urban heat and the benefits of tree planting. Jasmine Payget joined a panel of other Sydney riverkeepers and catchment groups to discuss engaging communities to care for our waterways.



Images: (Top) Jasmine Payget (third from left) at the Greater Sydney Landcare AGM; (Right) PRAWN field trip at the Field of Mars, Ryde.

Biodiversity and Education Subcommittee

This subcommittee provides a platform for PRCG member agencies to share information and resources that support biodiversity awareness and conservation efforts to improve habitat and catchment health.

Two meetings were held this year to discuss key Masterplan projects, including grant initiatives, creek restoration, and assessing citizen science programs.



Parramatta River and Waterways Network (PRAWN)

The Parramatta River and Waterways Network (PRAWN) was established to support local environmental groups in the Parramatta River catchment share information, build capacity, and enhance community engagement.

Chaired by Bev Debrincat from Habitat Network (Ryde) and supported by the Riverkeeper, PRAWN provides feedback on the Riverkeeper Program, hosts information sessions, and collaborates on citizen science projects with Greater Sydney Landcare.

This year, two meetings featured field trips to McIlwaine Park in Rhodes and Field of Mars in Ryde, where the group discussed strategies to reduce tree vandalism, school partnerships, pollution reporting, and coastal saltmarsh protection. In the second half of 2024, PRAWN will focus on identifying key issues and potential projects.

Local Small Commitments Allocation

The Riverkeeper is facilitating the submission for a \$25,000 grant from the NSW Premier's Department to support local volunteer communities in the Lane Cove electorate (Hunter's Hill and City of Ryde). Projects will include a Powerful Owl Monitoring Program, a Rapid Riparian Assessment course, and a Junior Riverkeeping school holiday program.

Riverkeeper Ambassadors

Our Riverkeeper Ambassadors are dedicated environmental educators and community leaders who inspire local residents to learn about and help care for our waterways. The advocacy and support they provide through their established networks helps the PRCG amplify its efforts to improve catchment health.

Charlene Bordley

Charlene runs the cycling social enterprise Addventagous, educating the community about local wildlife and river health through various cycling programs and workshops for all ages and abilities. This year, Charlene supported several PRCG events, including PRAWN and the Our Living River 10th anniversary celebrations. In November, she received the We Ride! Australia Cycling Luminaries Award for Leadership.



Kellie Darley

Kellie is co-founder of the ParraParents website and serves as a Councillor with the City of Parramatta. Kellie was elected as PRCG Vice Chair in 2023 where she provided strategic support to the group. She also continues to raise awareness of litter impacting our waterways through her clean-up events in George Kendall Riverside Park, Ermington, where her volunteers collected more than 83 bags of litter weighing 160 kg.



Julia Strykowski

Julia (Julz) actively advocates for litter prevention and sustainability through various initiatives, including Friends of Toongabbie Creek (FoTC), Waste2Art, and Boomerang Bags. This year, she organised two creek clean-up events with 100 volunteers, collecting nearly 1,000 kg of litter. Julz also supported bushcare activities at four sites and monthly Streamwatch testing by FoTC volunteers. Additionally, she contributed to several PRCG events, including Riverfest, PRAWN, and the Our Living River 10th anniversary celebrations.



Images: (from top) Jasmine Payget, Erin Byrne, Charlene Bordley, and Nadia Young at the Ryde Sustainability Festival; Kellie Darley with Federal Member for Bennelong Jerome Laxale at the Ermington Clean Up Australia Day event; Julz Strykowski (far right) with volunteers at the Toongabbie Creek Clean Up Australia Day event.



DSA Dragon Boat Club Open Day at Rhodes

Riverfest

Our annual premier community event Riverfest ran from World Clean Up Day on 16 September to World Rivers Day on 24 September, showcasing diverse ways to connect with the Parramatta River.

The Fraternity In Truth Association (FITA) mobilised over 50 volunteers for a clean-up at Kissing Point Park, followed by an award ceremony with City of Ryde's Cr Penny Pederson and Clean Up Australia Day CEO, Jenny Geddes.

Litter Free Parramatta, ParraParents, and the Wardens of the Parramatta River cleaned up the mangroves at George Kendall Riverside Park, with support from Maritime Services and Federal Member for Bennelong, Jerome Laxale MP. Friends of Toongabbie Creek also held a clean-up along a one-kilometre stretch of Toongabbie Creek.

Blacktown City Council hosted two 'Spotlight on Biodiversity' nature walks and supported the PRCG stand at the Youth EcoSummit. The PRCG also partnered with the City of Parramatta and Sydney Water for a tour of the new Milson Park Wetland.

On World Rivers Day, the City of Canada Bay held their Spring Clean for Shorebirds at Halliday Park, supported by Birdlife Australia and the 2nd Abbotsford Sea Scouts. The DSA Dragon Boat Club also hosted an Open Day at Rhodes, attended by Federal Member for Reid, Sally Sitou MP.

The PRCG, National Trust of Australia, and Greater Sydney Parklands organised a special event at Parramatta Park, featuring self-guided walks and citizen science activities. A big thank you to everyone who supported this year's Riverfest.



Volunteers at George Kendall Riverside Park



2nd Abbotsford Sea Scouts at Halliday Park



Milson Park Wetland Tour

PRCG FINANCIAL REPORT (2023-2024)

INCOME	\$
Carryover funds 2022-23	196,021
Annual membership fees	321,785
2023-2024 Grant Funds (Local Landcare Coordinator)	61,857
Stormwater Compliance and Education Program	65,297
Parramatta River Bank Naturalisation and Planning of Priority Corridors Project	99,460
Community Landcare mini grant - Citizen Science app development	1,596
Metro Greenspace Grant - Designing with Country project	36,495
Total income	\$782,511

EXPENSES	\$
Salaries and on-costs (PRCG)	162,060
Salaries and on-costs (Local Land Coordinator/Riverkeeper)	92,298
Materials and Services (PRCG)	102,634
Materials and Services (Local Land Coordinator/Riverkeeper)	1,002
Stormwater Compliance and Education Program	65,297
Parramatta River Bank Naturalisation and Planning of Priority Corridors Project	99,460
Riverkeeper Program	3,019
Our Living River 10th Anniversary	9,399
Riverfest	5,196
Metro Greenspace Grant - Designing with Country project	27,220
Community Landcare mini grant - Citizen Science app development	1,596
Total expenses	\$569,181

NET OPERATING RESULT	\$213,330
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PRCG received grants in advance of \$1.8 million to complete the Stormwater Compliance and Education Program and Parramatta River Bank Naturalisation and Planning of Priority Corridors Project over the next four years. In 2023-24, the PRCG spent \$164,757, leaving \$1,635,243 for future use. Note this figure does not include any interest earned on the unspent balance.



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