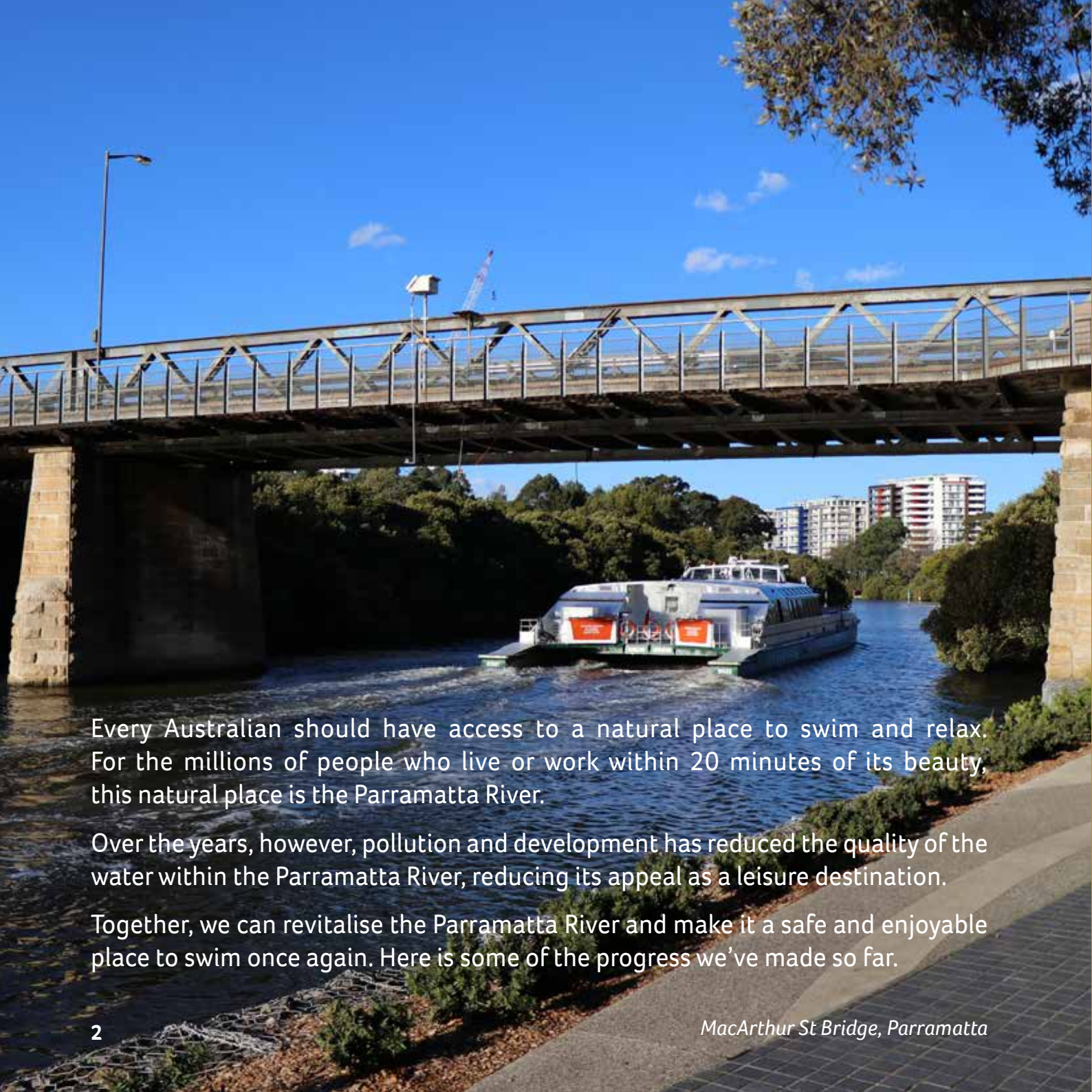


OUR PROGRESS TO A WORLD CLASS RIVER



PARRAMATTA RIVER MASTERPLAN
PROGRESS UPDATE – AUGUST 2017

PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT GROUP



Every Australian should have access to a natural place to swim and relax. For the millions of people who live or work within 20 minutes of its beauty, this natural place is the Parramatta River.

Over the years, however, pollution and development has reduced the quality of the water within the Parramatta River, reducing its appeal as a leisure destination.

Together, we can revitalise the Parramatta River and make it a safe and enjoyable place to swim once again. Here is some of the progress we’ve made so far.



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WHO IS THE PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT GROUP?



The Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) is an alliance of councils, government agencies and community groups. Together, we are working to improve the Parramatta River and the creeks that flow into it.

To enable Sydney-siders to once again enjoy the waters of this iconic river, we are driving strategic actions under the pillars of planning and research, coordination, advocacy, monitoring and reporting, communications and engagement.

Our financial members include the following councils and state government agencies:



THE PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT

The Parramatta River is the main tributary of Sydney Harbour and extends from Blacktown Creek in the west to where it meets the Lane Cove River in the east. Its catchment area covers 266km² and traverses 11 local government areas. The headwaters of the river are freshwater up until the Parramatta CBD at the Charles Street weir, where the river becomes estuarine.

Until the 1950s, the Parramatta River was the focal point for many social and recreational activities. However, lack of regulation and rapid industrial development caused substantial degradation of the water quality, leading to the closure of many popular river swimming spots.

OUR LIVING RIVER

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.

Little Coogee, Parramatta

OUR PLAN FOR THE RIVER

It may not come as a surprise that to achieve a swimmable Parramatta River by 2025 requires extensive planning, collaboration and resourcing. As a result, we're currently developing a Masterplan to help see our mission through. These are the main focus areas shaping our plan:



1 BUILD SUPPORT



2 SET TARGETS & WRITE PATHWAYS



3 IDENTIFY ISSUES



4 REPORT SUCCESS

WHAT IS A SWIMMABLE RIVER?

A swimmable river means more than just swimming. We have worked closely with our partners and community to identify the following key elements of a swimmable river.



CLEAN, CLEAR WATER
that is safe and supports
life in the river.



QUALITY FACILITIES
for events, leisure,
recreation and family fun.



EASE OF ACCESS
through improved public
transport and connected
cycleways and walkways.



AN ENGAGED COMMUNITY
that loves and cares for
their waterways.



BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES
enabling thriving local businesses
due to the river's popularity.



HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS
in the river, the catchment
and natural creeks.

We are now in the process of setting our targets and writing the pathways to address each of these elements of a swimmable river.

PARRAMATTA RIVER MASTERPLAN

The Parramatta River Masterplan will form the blueprint for how we make the river swimmable again, by developing evidence-based targets and actions that are endorsed and approved by all relevant stakeholders.

The Masterplan is being delivered in two Stages. In Stage 1, we have undertaken a series of research projects to:

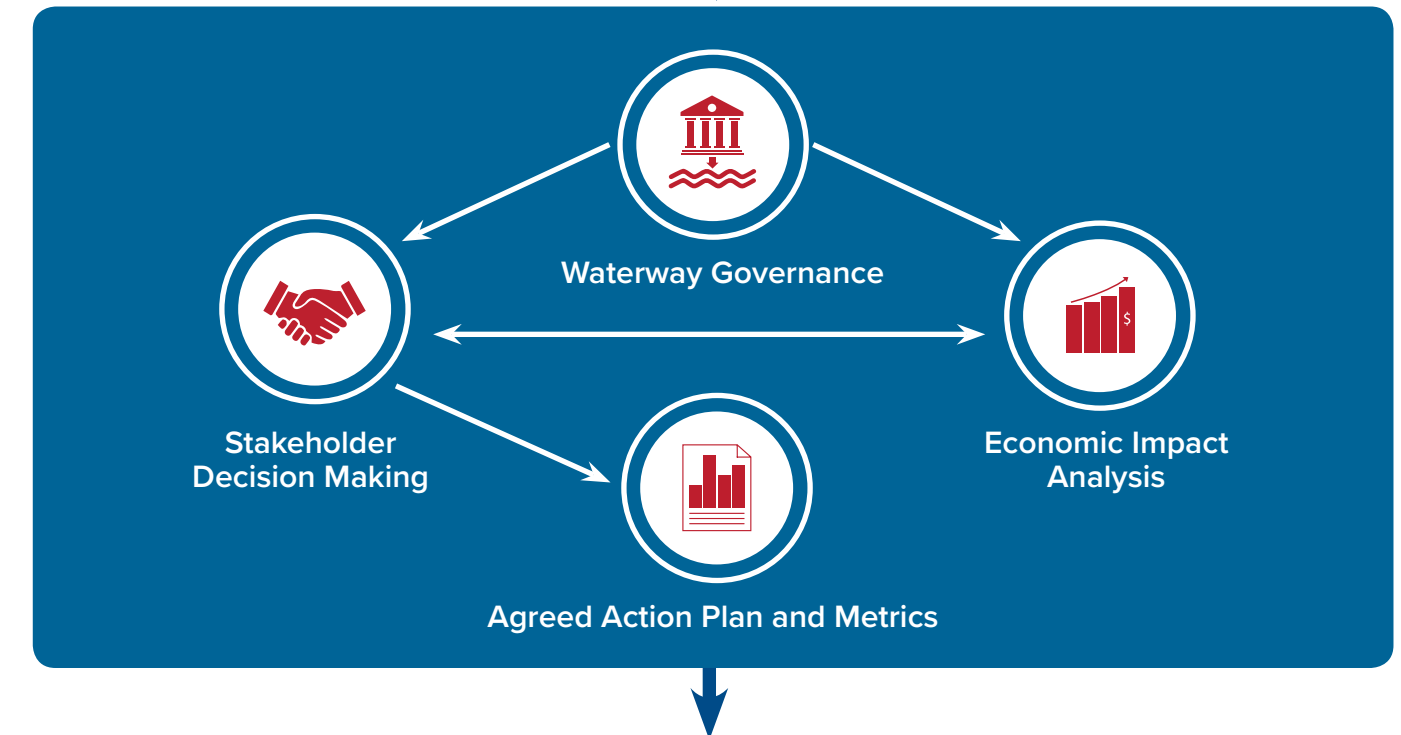
- Better understand and define the elements of swimmable river.
- Develop an evidence base for actions and targets that can be realistically achieved by 2025.
- Establish clear metrics for how we monitor progress towards achieving these targets.

In Stage 2, we will use this evidence base to make decisions on the pathways we will take to achieve our mission.

STAGE 1 – BACKGROUND RESEARCH



STAGE 2 – DECISION MAKING



PARRAMATTA RIVER MASTERPLAN

● Complete
● For Completion

COMMUNITY RESEARCH

We need to understand how the community feel about swimming in the Parramatta River and what it means to them, so we can establish active, well-used swimming spots that meet community wants and needs.

We asked more than 1100 residents from across the 11 local government areas in the Parramatta River catchment about their current behaviour around water, barriers to swimming in the river, preferences for swimming site activation and appetite for recreation in the Parramatta River.

The research confirmed that there is a high demand for a more convenient natural swimming location for people living in the catchment. Residents also highlight the importance of sites as more than places just to swim, but as recreational destinations.



SWIMMING SITES

We engaged the community and local foreshore councils to identify potential sites where people want to swim along the Parramatta River. Over 6000 community votes were lodged for a favourite swimming site.

Sixteen sites were shortlisted based on community interest and willingness of land owners to activate and manage the sites.

There are currently four existing swimming sites along the Parramatta River, including: Lake Parramatta, Cabarita beach, Chiswick Baths and Dawn Fraser Pool. Management recommendations should aim to maintain or enhance water quality and foreshore amenity at these sites to ensure they continue to be available to the community in 2025.

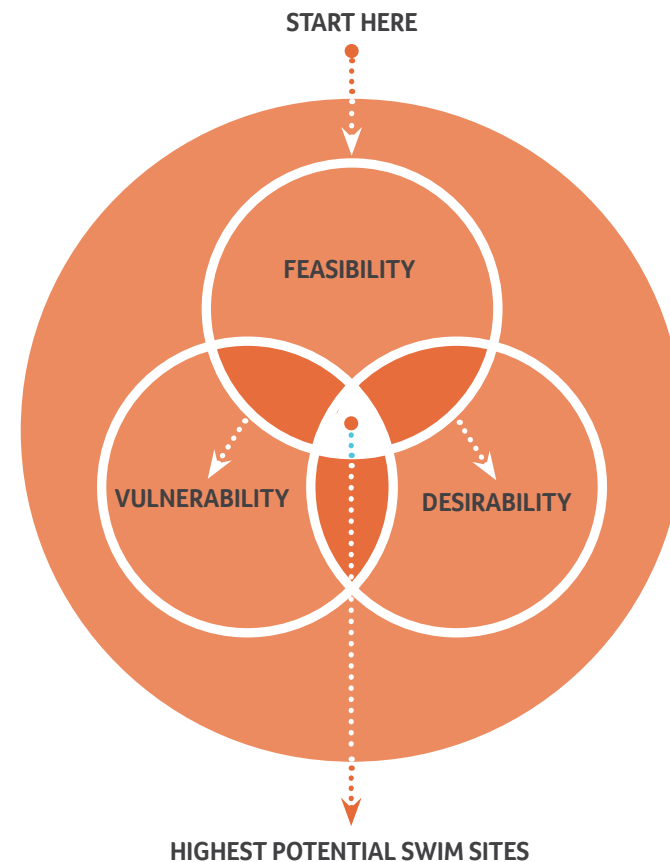


- | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Lake Parramatta | 5 Silverwater Park | 9 Kissing Point Park | 13 Henley Baths |
| 2 Little Coogee | 6 Meadowbank | 10 Cabarita beach | 14 Chiswick Baths |
| 3 Parramatta CBD | 7 Putney Park | 11 Quarantine Reserve | 15 Callan Park |
| 4 MacArthur St Bridge | 8 Brays Bay | 12 Bayview Park | 16 Dawn Fraser Pool |

SWIM SITE FRAMEWORK

There are several characteristics that impact the feasibility and success of a location as an active swimming site. To understand the potential for activating swim sites along the river, and what options are available for each specific swim site, a decision framework has been developed.

This site activation framework provides guidance on the potential for activation and what type of activation can be achieved at a site.



SWIM SITE FEASIBILITY

Feasibility criteria are used to determine what type of river site activation options are possible at different sites along the river. They include ecological restrictions, boat traffic, water quality, water depth and publicly available land.



SWIM SITE VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability criteria are used to determine the risk at a site when considering activation. They are broadly based on the *Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Waters* and include water quality, water clarity, river dynamics, river bed physical hazards, river bed and edge characteristics and heritage. To explore this risk in more detail, Royal Life Saving has conducted detailed risk assessments at two representative swimming sites along the river – Little Coogee and Kissing Point Park.

SWIM SITE DESIRABILITY

Desirability relates to urban form elements which impact the overall swimming site appeal and how often people are likely to visit and spend time at the site. Desirability characteristics include access and movement, adjacent open space, natural environment, built form and aesthetics, governance and implementation and community demand.

We have conducted community focus groups at each proposed new swimming site to have them assess each site for current and future desirability.



WATER QUALITY

The Parramatta River has a history of contamination stretching back to European colonisation. Today, the river continues to be polluted from industry, municipal waste, urban stormwater and sewage systems.

When considering human contact with the water, there are varying risk levels, depending on the water quality. We have undertaken a series of technical studies to understand:

- What, how and when we need to monitor to assess the suitability of a site for swimming.
- The condition of the river now and as it changes over time.
- Where swimming could be feasible in 2025 under a range of local and catchment management scenarios.

We have commenced the first stage of our Riverwatch monitoring program at six proposed new swimming sites along the river.



Sediment sample testing

WHERE COULD NATURAL SWIMMING BE POSSIBLE BY 2025?

There are currently four natural swimming sites along the Parramatta River open for public swimming. These sites are routinely monitored and reported to the public.

Our modelling shows that water quality can be improved, even with predicted development in the catchment. This will require additional planning controls for stormwater management, wastewater infrastructure and community education.

It is possible that more swim sites in the lower parts of the river could be opened for natural swimming by 2025.

Other sites in the upper river would need more innovative solutions to become swimmable.

POSSIBLE WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS AT THREE REPRESENTATIVE SWIMMING SITES



KISSING POINT PARK

Water quality may already be suitable for natural swimming, but further monitoring and additional local and catchment interventions would be needed to ensure water quality is maintained into the future.



BRAYS BAY

Water quality is currently not suitable for natural swimming, but could become swimmable again by 2025 with additional planning controls for stormwater management and community education.



SILVERWATER PARK

Water quality is currently not suitable for natural swimming. Significant improvements could be made with combined management interventions, and swimming may be a long-term, viable prospect.

HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS



5000

community votes were lodged for a favourite mascot.

A living river means many things. Our mission includes seeing the Parramatta River become a river that is packed with life and healthy ecosystems, where plants and animals can flourish in the water and surrounding environments.

We identified five iconic species from the Parramatta River catchment that were chosen by the community, and whose presence and habitat requirements link to the goal to make the river swimmable.

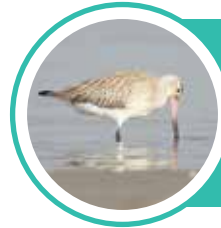
These five iconic species represent the range of environmental domains in the catchment, terrestrial, riparian, freshwater and estuarine habitats, and the communities they are part of. These icons are the centre of ecological action in the Masterplan and will be used as indicators of the health of our local waterways and catchment and our progress to making more areas safe for natural swimming.

OUR MASCOTS



STRIPED MARSH FROG

Dwells across the catchment. Species that thrive in clean water can be a good indication of aesthetic, recreational and (often) primary contact water quality. A diverse frog community tells us that the freshwater and riparian environment is healthy.



BAR-TAILED GODWIT

A fishing bird that lives on sand and mud-dwelling invertebrates found along the estuarine areas of the Parramatta River. Foreshore birds like the Godwit show we are maintaining our mangroves, saltmarsh and mudflats against urbanisation, pollution, weeds, erosion and reclamation.



SOUTHERN MYOTIS

Australia's only fishing bat. It requires creekside vegetation and catches water insects and the smallest fish. The Southern Myotis benefits from the retention of native riparian vegetation that offers roosting sites. It also enjoys water bodies with good water quality.



POWERFUL OWL

Inhabits forests and woodlands that help form native vegetation corridors. These act as filters that cleanse water before it enters the creek, stabilise creek banks and limit sedimentation and erosion. Owls and other woodland birds show we are maintaining the benefits of native vegetation corridors.



EASTERN LONG-NECKED TURTLE

Lives in freshwater creeks and needs deep ponds to swim and forage, and sandy banks to lay eggs. Healthy turtles inform us that creeks are not overly polluted by pesticides and other chemicals, banks aren't badly eroded and flows are just right.

WATERWAY GOVERNANCE

To successfully implement the Masterplan actions and achieve our mission, we will all need to do our part. There are a large number of stakeholders involved in making the river swimmable again, and the current governance can be confusing and complex.

We have mapped the existing governance structures around waterway management, ecological health and swimming site activation, and identified gaps and issues in the current structures.

Greater coordination is needed to manage the river and take the Masterplan forwards. We are now on our way to implementing these recommendations through the remainder of Stage 2 of the Plan.

SUMMARY OF WATERWAY GOVERNANCE RECOMMENDATIONS



NEXT STEPS: STAGE 2

We have received overwhelming support and input from local and state government and the community in developing the Masterplan, so far. We will continue to work with our stakeholders and the community to ensure we have a Masterplan that is understood, endorsed and actioned.

To achieve this goal we will:



INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY

in assessing what would make swimming sites desirable for them to use and enjoy in the future.



OBTAIN STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENT

on swimming sites, interventions, funding models and a lead coordinating body to drive Masterplan delivery.



UNDERTAKE AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

to help us make decisions and show the economic benefits of returning the river to swimmable conditions.



SEEK FEEDBACK FROM EVERYONE

on the draft Masterplan, so that we deliver a plan for the Parramatta River that belongs to us all.



LAKE PARRAMATTA

Lake Parramatta in 1942 (left), later closed for swimming due to poor water quality.

Lake Parramatta in 2015 (below), reopened for public swimming for the first time in 72 years.



GET INVOLVED

The Parramatta River belongs to all of us, and we want a plan that reflects that.

Connect with us to keep up-to-date with the progress of our Masterplan and how you can be involved.



Our Living River



@ourlivingriver



@ourlivingriver



info@ourlivingriver.com.au

Register to receive our e-newsletter at: ourlivingriver.com.au



ARE YOU READY TO SWIM IN THE RIVER?

If you want to find out more about
making the Parramatta River swimmable
or pledge your support visit:



ourlivingriver.com.au