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WHAT FUTURE DO YOU WANT TO SEE

WHY isn't the Parramatta River celebrated like Sydney Harbour is?

I can think of many reasons why this might be the case. Firstly, we have to acknowledge that the water quality of the Parramatta River has been historically poor. In particular, former industrial wastes around the Homebush Bay and Rhodes peninsula have left behind considerable contamination. This includes metals and a chemical called dioxin which has accumulated in the river sediment. Today there is no commercial fishing in Parramatta River, because of dioxin



contamination. And recreational fishers are warned not to eat anything caught in the river. There are lots of people working to change this and make the Parramatta River a celebrated waterway for the people of Sydney. The Parramatta River Catchment Group, including all 11 of the councils in the catchment of the river, has embarked on a program to improve water quality, with the aim making the Parramatta River swimmable. Would you swim in the river?

Did you know that people are already swimming in the river? For example, Dawn Fraser Baths at Balmain. People also swim at Cabarita beach and Chiswick Baths. Lake Parramatta is also open for swimming.

Several more sites along the river are being investigated as future swimming locations. Go to the [ourlivingriver](#) website to learn more and also to add your comment on the plans. On the same website you can also read about the 10 steps to making the river cleaner and take a look at the Parramatta River Master Plan.

What will the river be like in the future? I hope it becomes more important in the lives of the surrounding communities. We will need more: green space in our crowded lives; more parklands beside the river; children playing; parents pushing strollers or taking the dog for a walk; perhaps even a fish jumping in the river. We should also think how it could look if we don't work together to take care of it.

• By environmental scientist Ian Wright