



Serious sewage leak in river causes health concerns

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AN INVESTIGATION into a raw sewage leak in the Parramatta River has prompted health concerns.

A large amount of untreated waste water polluted the river at Northmead when a waste pumping station collapsed.

The overflow, which spilt into the river, has since been stopped, starting on October 21, and a bypass has been put in place.

The leak impacted the river at Balfour St adjacent to where Toongabbie Creek and Darling Mills Creek meet to flow into the Parramatta River, a major tributary.



Sydney Water workers and the NSW EPA have worked to maintain the leak and replace the pumping station.

The leak is a blow to the Parramatta River Catchment Group's (PRCG) mission to turn the river into a swimming spot by 2025.

Residents were told a crane was in place to help lift the cracked structural element and treat and remove asbestos. The pumping station was built in the 1940s, with asbestos containing materials.

Parramatta Green's councillor and member of the PRCG Phil Bradley said he was "disgusted by the failure".

"(The leak and) resultant heavy raw sewage spillage into the river will cause a serious downstream health risk, damage ecosystems and create offensive odours," he said.

"The pollution also undermines the great work of the PRCG to make the river swimmable again by 2025.

"Routine inspections and early preventive maintenance work could have avoided this disastrous spill."

Plans for safe swimming in the river was planned for 2025.



The site in Northmead has been fenced off for cleaning works.

In a recent announcement the PRCG pointed to three new swimming spots along the river including Bayview Park in Concord, McIlwaine Park in Rhodes and Putney Park in Putney.

A Sydney Water spokeswoman said work is still currently underway to restore the station.

"Our water quality monitoring indicates Parramatta River is beginning to return to normal conditions," the spokeswoman said.

"The damaged pumping station has been demolished. During its demolition, a licensed asbestos contractor was engaged to remove all the asbestos in accordance with SafeWork NSW codes of practice.

“A temporary wastewater station is currently under construction, with plans for a permanent replacement station being developed.

“The overflow has stopped and we have bypass arrangements and tankers in place to maintain service and minimise environmental impacts.



The leak is in a major tributary for Darling Mills Creek and Toongabbie Creek.

In a statement, the NSW Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) said it was working with government agencies following the incident, and its investigation was ongoing.

“In consultation with the EPA, Sydney Water has put measures in place to prevent further overflows, with bypass arrangements in place to control the flow and additional tankers on site as a precaution,” the statement said.

Sydney Water and the Western Sydney Local Health District have directed residents to avoid swimming, fishing and other recreational activities between Northmead and the Silverwater Bridge at Ermington.

Pets should also avoid swimming in the river, they advised.

Lake Parramatta is safe to use as it is upstream of the overflow area.

Sydney Water is undertaking water quality monitoring and is flushing the area with freshwater, as well as using aerators to increase oxygen in the water.

It is conducting a full investigation into what caused the pumping station to collapse.