EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to examine the strategic and statutory planning frameworks that can contribute to making Parramatta River a world class river, which is living and swimmable again. This goal is based on the 2018 Parramatta River Masterplan, published by the Parramatta River Catchment Group, and aligns with the District Plans of the Greater Sydney Commission and the local strategic plans of the catchment councils. A key to delivering this goal is to develop a whole-of-catchment land use policy and statutory planning mechanisms that is consistent across the catchment, is supported by state environmental planning instruments and is enabled with a funding mechanism to support maintenance and monitoring.

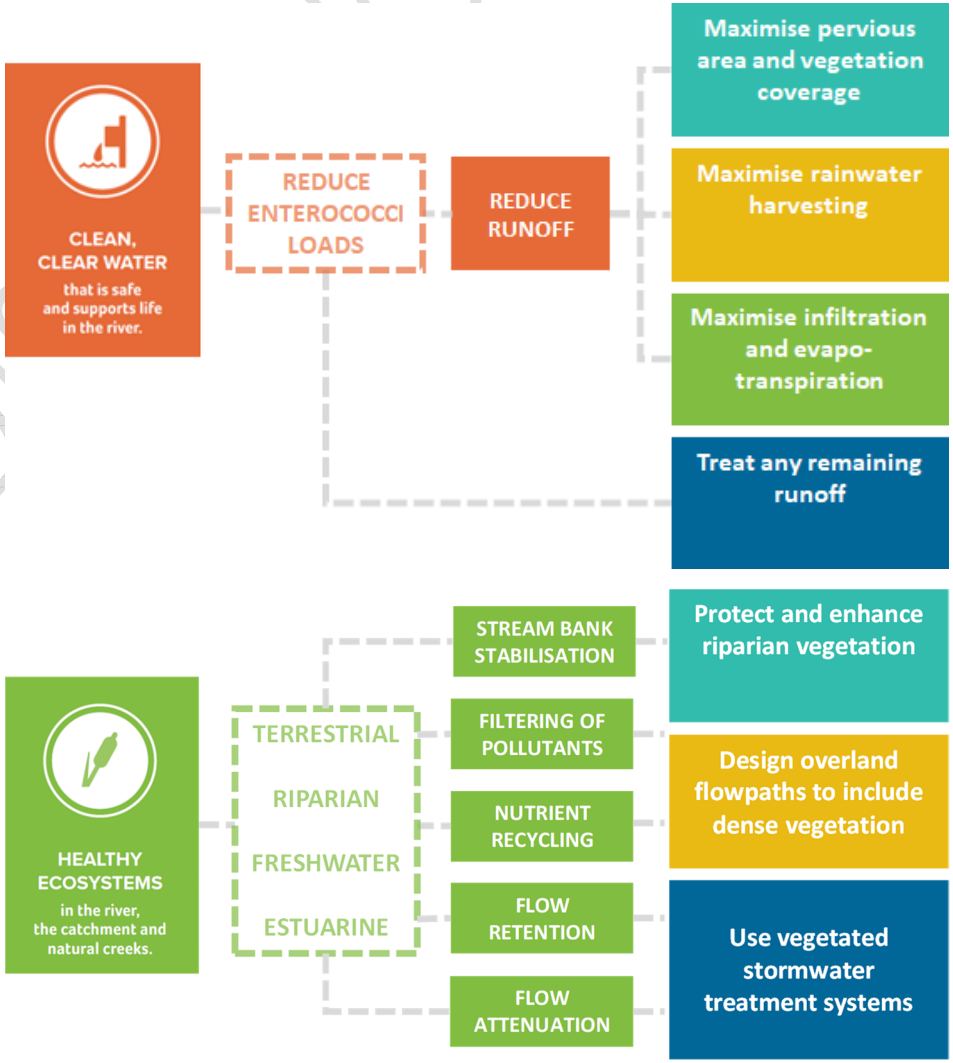
In the Parramatta River Masterplan, the vision for Parramatta River is holistic, incorporating environmental, social and economic aspects. Two goals where standards for new development will play an important role are:

1. Clean, clear water that is safe and supports life in the river
2. Healthy ecosystems in the river, the catchment and natural creeks.

Based on the research undertaken to support the Parramatta River Masterplan, this recommendations paper presents seven strategies that can be applied to the planning and design of new development, to help achieve these goals:

1. Maximise pervious area and vegetation coverage
2. Maximise rainwater harvesting
3. Maximise infiltration and evapo-transpiration
4. Treat any remaining runoff
5. Protect and enhance riparian vegetation
6. Design overland flowpaths to include dense vegetation
7. Use vegetated stormwater treatment systems

The recommendations in this paper also respond to the issues identified in the 2019 Standardising the Standards Discussion Paper, including the challenges inherent in taking a holistic approach that aims for integrated delivery with other infrastructure, to achieve multiple objectives in all development types, across both public and private domains, and requires the support of adequate funding and resources at all stages.



This paper presents recommendations for three stages of policy reform:

Stages	The opportunity	The recommendations	Implementation
NOW: Update LEP and DCP controls	With many councils being well advanced with the current cycle of LEP and DCP updates, the scope for further changes in this cycle may be limited, however the recommendations remain relevant for future updates.	**Include consistent wording in LEPs and DCPs**, in support of improved waterway and catchment outcomes. Specific recommendations have been made for different parts of the LEP and DCP, reflecting the seven strategies identified above. Suggested wording is also provided.	LEPs are updated via a Planning Proposal, prepared by local government and reviewed by DPIE. DPIE completes the final wording of the instrument. DCPs are updated by local councils. The PRCG can provide support.
1-3 YEARS: Develop, pilot and locally adopt new frameworks: a Blue-Green Index and a Blue-Green Grid	The discussion paper identified major systemic challenges with delivering blue-green infrastructure to meet waterway health and liveability goals, particularly in infill development. Modelling undertaken for the 2018 Masterplan also showed that scenarios including current best practice treatment would result in only modest water quality improvements in the Parramatta River. This indicates a need for more substantial policy reform.	**Develop, pilot and locally adopt new frameworks** for improving water quality and waterway health in new development: A **Blue-Green Index:** This would be designed to meet the needs of both developers and statutory planners, as a performance-based tool offering flexibility and policy certainty, and as an evidence-based and vertically aligned policy approach, to support water sensitive urban design and landscape outcomes. **A Blue-Green Grid:** a waterway and riparian zone policy to improve water quality and waterway health outcomes and to protect, restore and support ecological and community access along key waterway corridors. The creation of this blue green grid aligns with and builds on existing state government green grid guidelines and riparian policies but would be tailored so as to respond to the specific pressures, conditions and potential that vary spatially throughout the Parramatta River catchment.	The PRCG should lead the development of both these frameworks. Development of the Blue-Green Index can commence with a pilot involving a small number of councils. It would benefit from collaboration with other agencies working in green infrastructure implementation. For the Blue-Green Grid, initial mapping of waterways and riparian zones across the catchment is partially complete and can be finalised rapidly. The supporting policy would need to be developed in conjunction with councils and the state planning and water agencies.
3-5 YEARS: Strengthen and support local reforms, including revisions to State policies	There is a need to ensure that water quality and waterway health are considered in all planning and approval pathways, beginning as early as possible in the process. This will require broader reform, beyond local government.	**Rebuild the business case** for blue-green infrastructure as an integrated approach to meet multiple objectives. Use the business case to redefine what can be achieved in new development, what should be included in the public and private domain, and who should contribute funding. **Implement State-level policy reforms** to ensure blue-green infrastructure can be implemented as intended, considering all planning and approval pathways and stages in the process.	This will require collaboration across local and state government, across different agencies and with input from different disciplines. New frameworks (above) should assist with this process, but it will also need further planning and design input and research, including technical input (to build the evidence base) and economic (to build the business case).