

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 that is living and swimmable again. This goal is based on the 2018 Parramatta River Masterplan, published by the Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG), 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 are consistent across the catchment, is supported by state environmental planning instruments and is enabled with a funding mechanism to support maintenance and monitoring.

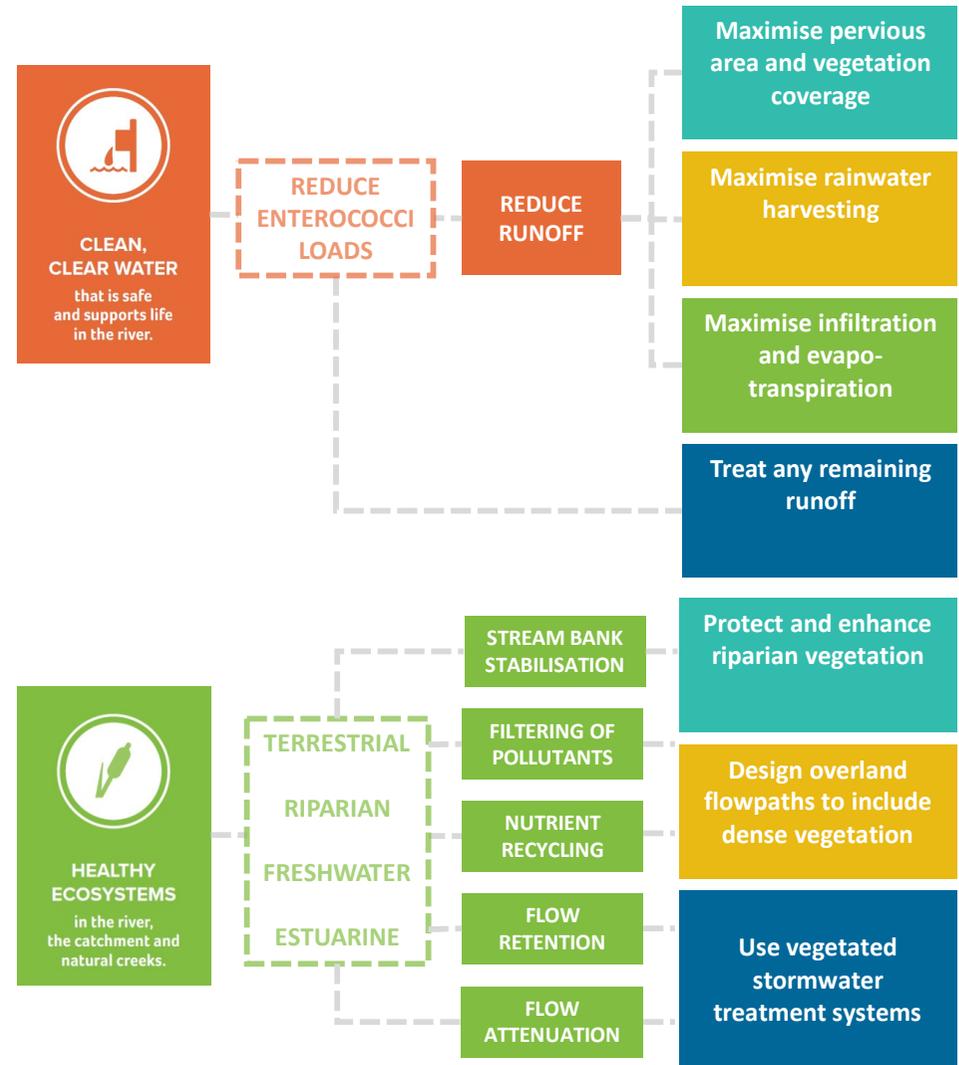
In the Parramatta River Masterplan, the vision for Parramatta River is holistic, incorporating environmental, social and economic aspects. Two goals where standards for new development will play an important role are:

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 evapotranspiration
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	
<p>SHORT-TERM UPDATES (Councils to implement over next 1-3 years) Simple updates to LEP and DCP controls</p>	<p>Minor changes to Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) and Development Control Plans (DCPs) can improve existing and add new provisions to ensure that development does more to reduce stormwater pollution and foster healthy ecosystems.</p>	<p>Strengthen the wording in LEPs and DCPs. This should be directed to improve outcomes for the Parramatta River and its catchment. Specific recommendations have been made for changing current LEPs and DCPs, reflecting the seven strategies identified above. Suggested wording is also provided. It is up to each council to consider these recommendations in balance with other local planning objectives, and to determine how best to implement them locally.</p>	<p>LEPs are updated via a Planning Proposal, prepared by local government and reviewed by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE). The NSW Parliamentary Counsel's Office completes the final wording of the instrument. DCPs are updated by local councils. The PRCG can provide support.</p>	
		<p>Specific actions</p>	<p>Responsibility</p>	<p>Timing</p>
		<p>Update LEPs to strengthen aims of plan, zoning provisions and local provisions relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaped areas • Stormwater management and WSUD • Waterways and riparian land • Foreshore development 	<p>All PRCG member councils</p>	<p>2021-23</p>
		<p>Comprehensive update of DCPs to strengthen provisions for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaped areas • Deep soils • Trees • Native vegetation • Rainwater harvesting • Stormwater quantity • Stormwater quality • Riparian vegetation • Overland flowpaths • Vegetated stormwater treatment systems 	<p>All PRCG member councils</p>	<p>2021-23</p>
<p>Update relevant design guidance, technical specifications, and standard drawings, to support new/updated DCP provisions</p>	<p>All PRCG member councils</p>	<p>2021-23</p>		

Stages	The opportunity	The recommendations	Implementation	
<p>LONGER TERM, MORE SUBSTANTIAL REFORMS (PRCG to lead over next 1-5 years) Develop, pilot and locally adopt new frameworks: a Blue-Green Index and a Blue-Green Grid</p>	<p>New planning policy approaches are needed to address current and projected pressures related to development in the catchment. Major systemic changes are required to deliver blue-green infrastructure to meet waterway health and liveability goals. This is particularly for infill development that under current approaches will reduce deep soil and increase impervious areas. Modelling undertaken for the 2018 Masterplan showed that existing initiatives to improve water quality would result in only minor, localised water quality improvements in the Parramatta River.</p>	<p>Develop, pilot and locally adopt new frameworks for improving water quality and waterway health for new development: A Blue-Green Index. This would be a performance-based tool, incorporating multiple objectives into a scoring system to rate the water and landscape inputs. It would be designed to meet the needs of developers (clarity and certainty in the objectives and targets, with flexibility in specific design solutions) and planners (ease of use and policy alignment, with clear outcomes). It would be evidence-based and vertically aligned to state policies and plans to support water sensitive urban design and landscape outcomes. A Blue-Green Grid. This would be a new framework for classifying waterways and mapping riparian zones for land use planning purposes. New approaches are needed to protect, restore and support water quality, waterway health and ecological outcomes and community access along key waterway corridors. The creation of a Blue-Green Grid aligns and builds on existing state government green grid guidelines and riparian policies. For the Parramatta River catchment, it would be tailored to respond to specific pressures, conditions and potential restoration opportunities.</p>	<p>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. These supporting policy approaches would need to be developed in conjunction with councils and the state planning and water agencies.</p>	
		<p>Specific actions to develop the Blue-Green Index</p>	<p>Responsibility</p>	<p>Timing</p>
		<p>Establish a working group including members from PRCG and selected council representatives</p>	<p>PRCG</p>	<p>2020</p>
		<p>Develop an initial pilot version of the tool</p>	<p>PRCG + working group</p>	<p>2021</p>
		<p>Test the pilot among PRCG councils</p>	<p>PRCG + member councils</p>	<p>2022</p>
		<p>Develop a public facing Blue Green Index tool</p>	<p>PRCG + member councils</p>	<p>2023</p>
		<p>Staged local implementation</p>	<p>All PRCG member councils</p>	<p>2023-25</p>
		<p>Explore potential inclusion in a state environmental planning instrument</p>	<p>PRCG + NSW Government</p>	<p>2021-25</p>
		<p>Specific actions to develop the Blue-Green Grid</p>	<p>Responsibility</p>	<p>Timing</p>
		<p>Establish a working group including members from PRCG and selected council representatives</p>	<p>PRCG</p>	<p>2020</p>
		<p>Refine the waterway categories and objectives</p>	<p>PRCG + working group</p>	<p>2021</p>
		<p>Waterway and riparian area mapping, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and categorise waterway reaches, catchment-wide 2. Refine the categorisation of waterway reaches based on local data 3. Add planning layers and identify where there is potential for waterway and riparian restoration 4. Define extent of proposed riparian zones and identify specific objectives that apply within each zone 5. Field validation and ongoing review 	<p>PRCG + member councils</p>	<p>2021-25</p>
		<p>Update LEPs</p>	<p>All PRCG member councils</p>	<p>2023-25</p>
		<p>Update DCPs</p>	<p>All PRCG member councils</p>	<p>2023-25</p>

Stages	The opportunity	The recommendations	Implementation	
<p>SUPPORTING ACTIONS: SHORT- AND LONG-TERM (PRCG to work with DPIE over next 1-5+ years) Strengthen and support local reforms, including revisions to State policies</p>	<p>Ensure 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.</p>	<p>Rebuild the business case for blue-green infrastructure. Blue-green infrastructure can support a productive, liveable and sustainable development and places across the catchment. The business case should extend to public and private domains and apply to stakeholders across the life-cycle stages, including how funding is to be provided.</p> <p>Implement State-level policy reforms. A liveable river will require a transformation in policy and practice. To ensure blue-green infrastructure can achieve its objectives, change is needed across planning and approval pathways.</p>	<p>This will require collaboration and coordination within and between catchment councils and state government. New frameworks (above) should assist with this process, but will need further planning and design input and research, including technical input (to build the evidence base) and economic (to build the business case).</p>	
		<p>Specific actions</p>	<p>Responsibility</p>	<p>Timing</p>
		<p>Develop a business case for blue-green infrastructure policy reforms</p>	<p>PRCG</p>	<p>2022-23</p>
		<p>Explore options to strengthen financing mechanisms for blue-green infrastructure in new development, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developer contributions • In-lieu contributions • Ongoing (i.e. ratepayer) contributions 	<p>PRCG + NSW Government</p>	<p>2023-25</p>
		<p>Provide input to relevant state-led policies and strategic plans such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the NSW Water Quality Objectives • Development of a Parramatta River case study to demonstrate the application of the Risk-based Framework • Review of the NSW Diffuse Source Water Pollution Strategy • Greater Sydney Harbour Coastal Management Program 	<p>PRCG + NSW Government</p>	<p>2020-23</p>
		<p>Provide input to upcoming revisions to State Environmental Planning Policies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential revision of the BASIX SEPP • New Design and Place SEPP • New Water Catchments SEPP 	<p>PRCG + NSW Government</p>	<p>2020-23</p>
		<p>Provide input to new guidelines being developed by state government, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal design guidelines • Design guidelines to support the Water Catchments SEPP • Design guidelines/specifications/rating schemes to support the Design and Place SEPP 	<p>PRCG + NSW Government</p>	<p>2020-23</p>
		<p>Advocate for further policy reforms, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger consideration of blue-green infrastructure objectives in all assessment pathways • Improvement of State agencies' internal policies for blue-green infrastructure in their projects • Potential changes to the <i>Water Management Act</i> 	<p>PRCG + NSW Government</p>	<p>2020-25+</p>
		<p>Monitor policy and environmental outcomes</p>	<p>PRCG</p>	<p>2020-ongoing</p>