

Media release

24 April 2018

Inspection blitz to bring wildlife and swimmers back to Sydney's rivers

A month-long campaign targeting sediment run-off at Sydney and Central Coast construction sites will get underway in May, with dozens of compliance officers set to inspect building sites with the aim of improving the quality of Sydney's waterways and bringing wildlife and swimmers back to the city's harbours and rivers.

In May 2018, the Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG), NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Cooks River Alliance, Georges River Riverkeeper, Sydney Coastal Councils Group, Department of Planning & Environment, and over 20 councils will join forces for a fourth *Get the Site Right* compliance and education campaign.

Launched by the PRCG in 2016, the month-long campaign targets erosion and sediment control on building and construction sites across Sydney and the Central Coast. It also aims to raise awareness about the effects of sediment laden run-off on our waterways.

Results from the November 2017 campaign showed a steady improvement in compliance rates from the previous campaign held last May.

NSW EPA Regional Director Metropolitan Giselle Howard said sediment run-off was an often-overlooked issue that could have significant impacts on the environment.

"Everyone in Sydney wants to see our waterways return to a condition where aquatic life can thrive and residents can swim," Ms Howard said.

"Sediment laden run-off might seem like a small problem limited to gutters and stormwater drains, but when that run-off hits our waterways it not only affects the water quality and amenity, but it smothers aquatic vegetation, clogs fish gills, and can even block waterways entirely during storms and floods.

"While *Get the Site Right* is a targeted compliance blitz that will include the issuing of fines, what we're focused on is prevention as the cure: we want developers and builders to stop the sediment leaving their site boundaries in the first place by putting the appropriate erosion and sediment controls in place."

PRCG Chair Mark Drury said with Sydney's growing population there is a rapidly increasing demand for clean, local rivers and creeks.

"In a community survey conducted by the PRCG in 2016, 54 per cent of respondents said they would prefer to swim in the Parramatta River if it was safe to do so," Clr Drury said.

"With a growing population there is always going to be associated growth in construction, and *Get the Site Right* is an important part of our ongoing strategy to manage the environmental impacts of that construction and achieve our mission to make the Parramatta River swimmable again by 2025."

Members of the public can report pollution incidents, including poor sediment control, to the EPA's Environment Line on 131 555. More information on erosion and sediment control is available at:

www.ourlivingriver.com.au/getthesiteright

ENDS



MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

On **Wednesday, 16 May**, participating councils, NSW EPA and Department of Planning & Environment will be patrolling building sites across Sydney. **Interviews, photos and other media opportunities can be arranged upon request.**

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