

PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT

2016 – 2017



THE PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT GROUP

The Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) is an alliance of councils, government agencies and community groups, who are working together to improve the Parramatta River and the creeks that flow into it.

In 2014, we launched the *Our Living River* initiative with a new vision, purpose and mission:

OUR VISION

We believe
Sydney deserves a
world class river

OUR PURPOSE

To make
Parramatta River
a living river

OUR MISSION

To make Parramatta
River swimmable
again by 2025

A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR



In 2016-2017, we have made some great progress towards our mission to make the river swimmable again, having developed the evidence base for our Masterplan for the river, launched some important on-ground initiatives and continued to engage actively with our local communities.

The year started with our inaugural Riverfest! community celebration on the banks of the Parramatta River at beautiful Putney Park, where we launched our Parramatta River mascots and community Riverkeeper Network. Soon after, we launched the highly successful 'Get the Site Right' initiative, which highlights the important role that developers and builders can play in cleaning up

the river. We have also now completed Stage 1 of our whole-of-river Masterplan, that will form the blueprint for how we achieve our goal by 2025.

I am constantly impressed by the incredible efforts of our partners and community in helping to make the Parramatta River and creeks that flow into it places we can all love and enjoy. We thank each and every one of you for your continued commitment to work together towards this important and worthwhile goal.

Mayor Jerome Laxale
PRCG CHAIR

CATCHMENT-WIDE PLANNING & RESEARCH

Establishing the pathways to make the river swimmable again through the development of the Parramatta River Masterplan.



In 2016-17, we have made great progress on the Masterplan:

- ✓ Five background research projects completed on water quality, community research, ecological health, swimming site activation and waterway governance with Technical Reports on each.
- ✓ Stage 1 Summary Report and backgrounder developed.
- ✓ Stakeholder engagement process and economic analysis scope commenced to make decisions on the pathways we will take to achieve the mission.





Water Quality

To achieve our mission of making the Parramatta River swimmable again we need to understand the water quality needed for safe swimming. Research outcomes to date include:

- Investigation of how recreational water quality should be assessed in the Parramatta River
- Technical analysis to understand current water quality in the Parramatta River and the creeks that flow into it
- Detailed modelling across all local government areas to understand where swimming could be feasible in 2025 under a range of management scenarios; and
- Initial sediment analysis at six proposed swimming sites.



KEY RESULTS

- Modelling indicates that water quality in the Parramatta River will decline under the current business as usual approach, given predicted development in the catchment
- However, water quality can be improved through a combination of additional planning controls for stormwater management, wastewater infrastructure and pet waste pollution initiatives
- There is potential for more swim sites to be opened for natural swimming by 2025.

Community Research

Understanding what the river means to the community and how they feel about swimming in it is key to achieving our mission. In November 2016, we surveyed 1100 residents across all 11 local government areas in the Parramatta River catchment about the types of activities they like to do in or near water, their level of interest in, and concerns about swimming in the Parramatta River, and their desire for recreational facilities near proposed swimming areas.



KEY RESULTS

- Very high interest from residents across all council areas in swimming in a designated location in the Parramatta River
- More than half the residents would prefer to swim in the Parramatta River than travel to the beach if it were half the distance from home
- Main concerns about swimming are pollution and water quality, which would be overcome if an authority publicly reported that the water quality was safe for swimming
- High demand for swim sites to be destinations that provide multiple recreational opportunities and associated facilities.



Ecological Health

A living river is a river that is packed with life and healthy ecosystems, where plants and animals can flourish in the water and surrounding environments.

We conducted a review of plant and animal records across the catchment to identify a shortlist of species that have links to a swimmable river. We then asked the public to vote for their favourite species.

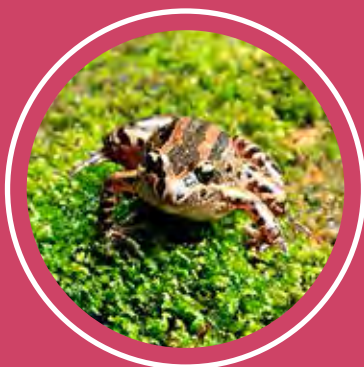
This vote gave us our five iconic species or mascots for the Parramatta River, which will form the focus of ecological action in the Masterplan and act as indicators of water quality and catchment health. These species represent the range of environmental domains in the catchment and communities they inhabit.



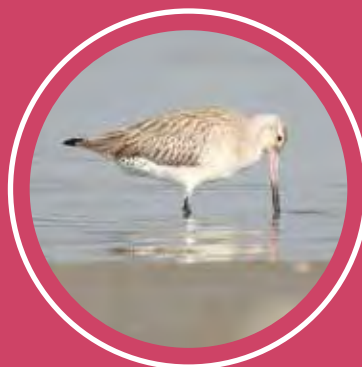
5000

community votes
were lodged for a
favourite mascot
in just three weeks
in July 2016.

OUR MASCOTS



Striped Marsh Frog
Riparian environment



Bar-tailed Godwit
Estuarine environment



Southern Myotis
Riparian environment



Powerful Owl
Terrestrial environment



Eastern Long-necked Turtle
Freshwater environment

Swim Site Activation

We have developed a swim site activation framework that will help us to assess the suitability of each site for swimming and other potential activation options.

The framework considers a range of site assessment criteria under three categories: feasibility, vulnerability and desirability.

The framework was applied to three representative swimming sites to demonstrate how it can be used to design future activation options for a site. It is now being used to assess all of the proposed new swimming sites along the river to enable more transparent and collaborative decision making to be made.

FEASIBILITY

- Ecological restrictions
- Boat traffic
- Water quality
- Bathymetry
- Publicly available land

VULNERABILITY

- Water clarity
- River dynamics
- River bed physical hazards
- River edge characteristics
- Heritage

DESIRABILITY

- Ease of access
- The surrounding natural environment
- Availability of facilities
- The attractiveness of the site



WORKING TOGETHER

Coordinating collaborative efforts across this network to deliver positive outcomes for the river in a more efficient and effective way.

OUR NETWORK



COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING

Continued implementation and public reporting on progress of the Certified Parramatta River Estuary Coastal Zone Management Plan, Our Living Catchment Fauna and Habitat report and 'Get the Site Right' initiative.

ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES

- Development of a Riverkeeper Network program to support community river care activities and complement council education programs by focusing on private lands across the catchment.
- Consistent messages delivered to our communities via joint media campaigns, hard copy materials and online resources.

COLLABORATING ACROSS CATCHMENTS

- Continued collaboration with other Sydney catchment groups on shared issues affecting Sydney's waterways.
- PRCG representation on the Greater Sydney Local Land Services Community Advisory Group, Sydney Harbour Estuary Processes Study Technical Group and Splash Steering Committee.

JOINT DECISION MAKING

- Quarterly Full Group meetings held with representatives from all PRCG member agencies and community groups to discuss and agree upon our actions and goals for the river and catchment, hosted by Hunters Hill, City of Ryde, The Hills Shire and City of Parramatta.
- Parramatta River Masterplan Reference Group meetings (x2) held with PRCG representatives and senior State agency officials to oversee development of the Masterplan, hosted by Sydney Water.

BUILDING CAPACITY ACROSS COUNCILS

- Regular opportunities for information sharing, staff capacity building, advice and collaboration provided through quarterly PRCG Officer meetings, regulatory and biodiversity subcommittee meetings, project-specific technical group meetings and workshops.
- Active member of Splash, a collaborative network that provides educational and training opportunities for staff to help them strategically plan towards a more water sensitive future for our city.

FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS

- Partnerships with universities and other scientific organisations, including:
- *Strengthening the Implementation of the Parramatta Greengrid and Audit of the Environmental Status of the Lower Parramatta River* projects (Macquarie University)
 - *Cooling the Commons Design and Media Memory* projects (Western Sydney University)
 - Oceanwatch Living Shorelines oyster bag pilot project.

Get the Site Right

The *Get the Site Right* initiative is a joint educational and regulatory campaign that highlights the important role developers play in cleaning up the river and making it swimmable again.

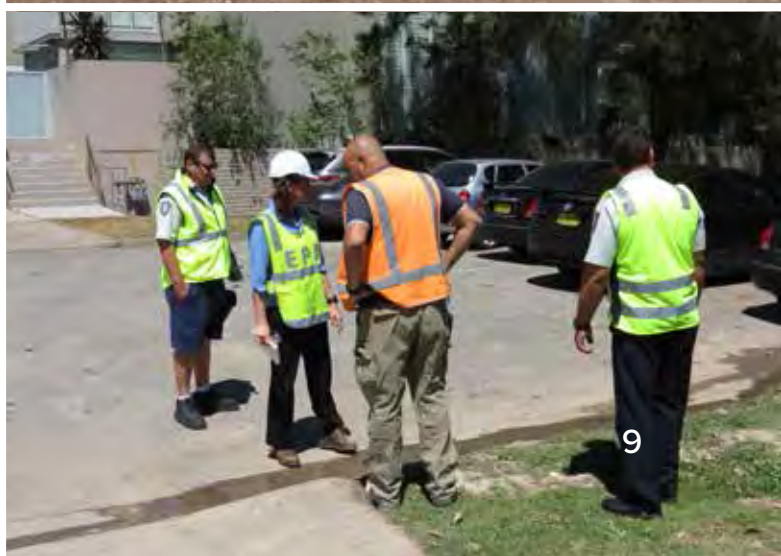
Sediment such as sand, soil and mud can run off building sites into stormwater drains and out to the Parramatta River, impacting aquatic plant and animal life and people's enjoyment of the river.

In the first campaign in October 2016, the NSW EPA and eight councils across the catchment inspected a total 204 sites and found 52% of sites were non-compliant. Fifty actions were issued, including 10 fines.

All 11 member councils, the NSW EPA and Department of Planning and Environment joined forces in the second campaign in May 2016. A total 439 sites were inspected, however 51% of sites were still found to be non-compliant, highlighting the need for sustained education and compliance in this area.

To support the initiative, educational materials were developed and disseminated to builders, developers and the general public, including an erosion and sediment control guidelines booklet, site inspection checklist, information flyers, and promotional signage.

The campaigns attracted significant media interest, generating 19 media features. Channel Nine covered the campaign and produced a comprehensive package for their nightly news program.



2016-17 BLITZ RESULTS

- ✓ 643 sites inspected
- ✓ 51% non-compliance
- ✓ \$292,000 in fines
- ✓ 19 media features
- ✓ 1.5 million reached

COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

Building support from the local communities that live, work and move through the catchment area to help make Parramatta River swimmable again.

Throughout 2016-17, the PRCG engaged with broad audiences and communities throughout the catchment, through a wide range of communications events and activities:



25+ community events



Produced a wide range of promotional collateral



86 local, state and national media features



757 followers across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, 60+ posts/tweets per month, attracting 800+ online interactions per month (likes, shares, retweets).



6000+ votes lodged for favourite swimming spots along the river



700 active subscribers to our e-newsletters



65,000+ page views and 25,000+ sessions by 18,735 users to date.

Riverfest! 2016

Over 1000 people attended the inaugural Riverfest! event, held in July 2016 at the beautiful Putney Park. This location is one of our potential swim sites on the Parramatta River.

The event provided the ideal occasion to launch the Riverkeeper Network and our five winning mascots for the Parramatta River, and also showcase the initiatives of our many state and local government partners and community groups who are helping to make the Parramatta River swimmable again.

The event attracted extensive media coverage, including Channel 9 and Channel 2 News, radio and newspaper. It was a fantastic celebration for all ages!



- ✓ 1000+ people attended
- ✓ 17 community stalls
- ✓ Riverkeeper & mascots launch
- ✓ 9 media features





Riverkeeper Network

The Riverkeeper Network was officially launched at *Riverfest 2016*, and is supported by funding from the Greater Sydney Local Land Services and Landcare NSW Local Landcare Coordinator Program.

During its first year, the Riverkeeper Network participated in a diverse range of events and activities, including the Burramatta Festival, Talkin' Turtles presentation and Earthwatch Institute Citizen Science Teach Live Godwit Program. Riverkeeper ambassador projects were also supported, notably Addventageous ecological educational cycling tours along the four weirs and three fish ladders on the Parramatta River. Work also commenced on the River Aware communities pilot project, which will be deployed in 2017-18.



42 Riverkeepers



7 affiliates



3 amazing ambassadors



18 community events



9 Riverkeeper talks to more than 350 people



15 workshops and seminars



4 Riverkeeper network projects underway



ADVOCACY

Joint advocacy with our partners on issues affecting the river and catchment helps provide a united voice for our communities and waterways.

During 2016-17, the PRCG made submissions to the planning of future policies impacting the environment and waterways:



- ✓ Greater Sydney Commission's Greater Parramatta and Olympic Peninsula (GPOP) Plan, specifically informing Direction 11: Make Parramatta River a great living waterway and connector, where people enjoy walking, cycling and safe swimming
- ✓ NSW Land management and biodiversity conservation reforms
- ✓ City of Canada Bay draft Wangal Reserve and Punt Park Plan of Management
- ✓ Sydney Olympic Park Authority draft Stormwater and Water Sensitive Urban Design Policy
- ✓ NSW Coastal Management Reforms
- ✓ Draft District Plans for Greater Sydney, which resulted in a new section being drafted on the Parramatta River and mission to make the river swimmable again
- ✓ City of Parramatta Draft Environmental Sustainability Strategy, which features the mission to make the Parramatta River swimmable again and ecological health mascots
- ✓ Letter to the honourable Mark Speakman, Minister for the Environment requesting NSW Government support on banning the use of Expanded Polystyrene in packaging
- ✓ Letter to the honourable Duncan Gay, Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight, regarding the delay in construction of Blackmore Park wetlands, who then confirmed that construction may proceed as planned.



MONITORING AND REPORTING

PRCG FINANCIAL REPORT, 2016-17

INCOME		\$
Carry over – member funds		60,703
Carry over – Enforceable undertaking		200,000
Carry over – Local Landcare Coordinator grant		10,099
Annual membership fees 2016-17		223,817
Grant funds (Local Landcare Coordinator)		50,000
Grant funds (Community Landcare Grant)		30,000
Additional member contributions – Riverfest		13,000
Total income		\$587,619
EXPENSES		\$
Salaries and on-costs (Coordinator and Communications Officer)		103,776
Salaries and on-costs (grant funded Riverkeeper)		49,915
Materials (Design, Printing, Collateral)		10,874
Contracts and consultancies		220,876
Other (Promotions, Advertising, Catering)		4,076
Total expenses		389,517
NET OPERATING RESULT		\$198,102

We report on progress regularly to our stakeholders and community via our website, e-newsletter, social media channels and meetings.

OUR REPRESENTATIVES

CHAIR

- Clr Jerome Laxale, City of Ryde

VICE CHAIR

- Clr Alan Haselden, The Hills Shire

COUNCILLORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

- Blacktown City Council: Clr Susai Benjamin
- City of Canada Bay: Clr Pauline Tyrrell
- City of Canterbury Bankstown: Mr Richard Colley
- City of Parramatta: Ms Amanda Chadwick, represented by Mr Scott Lloyd and Mr Shahadat Chowdhury
- City of Ryde: Clr Jerome Laxale, Clr Denise Pendleton, Clr Terry Perram
- Cumberland Council: Mr Viv May
- Hunters Hill Council: Clr Peter Astridge
- Inner West Council: Mr Richard Pearson, represented by Mr Frank Breen, Mr Mark Drury and Ms Monica Wangmann
- Strathfield Council: Clr Andrew Soulos, Clr Daniel Bott, Clr Raj Datta
- The Hills Shire Council: Clr Alan Haselden

PARRAMATTA RIVER MASTERPLAN REFERENCE GROUP

- Clr Jerome Laxale, Chair, Parramatta River Catchment Group
- Clr Alan Haselden, Vice Chair, Parramatta River Catchment Group
- Kevin Young, Managing Director, Sydney Water
- Kaia Hodge, Manager City Futures, Sydney Water
- Barry Buffier, Chair and CEO, NSW Environment Protection Authority
- Roderick Simpson, Environment Commissioner, Greater Sydney Commission
- Natalie Camilleri, A/Director Strategic Planning, Greater Sydney Commission
- Daylan Cameron, A/Director Greater Sydney, Office of Environment and Heritage
- Stephen Corbett, Director, Centre for Population Health, Western Sydney Local Health District, NSW Health
- Ms Paula Tomkins, GPOP Infrastructure Plan Team Leader, Department of Planning & Environment
- Beck Dawson, Chief Resiliency Officer, Sydney, 100 Resilient Cities Program

STAFF REPRESENTATIVES OF MEMBER AGENCIES

(Including staff participating in the PRCG Full Group, subcommittees and technical groups)

- Blacktown City Council: Keysha Milenkovic, Carolyn Adamcewicz, Yael Lang, Craig Bush, Jessica Thurston, Katrina Brown
- Burwood Council: Kundan Pokharel, Andrew McClure, Tai Trinh, Martin Jenner
- City of Canada Bay: Petrina Nelson, Tina Hsu, Nicole Thompson, Renae Barnes, Angela Rose, Rob Stevenson
- City of Canterbury Bankstown: Nell Graham, Charmaine Robertson
- City of Parramatta: James Smallson, Helen Papathanasiou, Paul Hackney, Pino Todarello, Stuart Pike, Glenn Haskins, Paul Lyth, WenNi Wong, Merryn Spencer, Edwina Morris, Callantha Brigham
- City of Ryde: Sam Cappelli, Kylie McMahon, Katie Helm, Sandra Payne, Liz Berger, Craig Redfern, Denise Torres, Nirodha Neupane
- Cumberland Council: Daniel Anderson, Rita Milostnik, Kerrie Davies, Frances Hamilton, Nyambura Mwankiki, Chris Chung, Stuart Nunn, Stewart Rodham, Sam Barnard
- Department of Planning and Environment: Yolanda Gil, Anthony Pizzolato, Chase Dingle, Michael Frankcombe
- NSW Environment Protection Authority: Jane Burgett, Giselle Howard, Alex Spaller, Alex Bowlay
- Hunters Hill Council: Jacqui Vollmer, Cate Alder
- Inner West Council: Janene Harris, Sarah Kamarudin, Mohammad Sikder, John Duncombe, Ryan Cole, Adam Ward
- Strathfield Council: Simon Leiva, Patrick Wong, Cathy Jones, Mark Latham, Alex Mackenzie
- Sydney Water: Phillip Birtles, Anne-Marie Mitchell, Kaia Hodge, Daniel Cunningham, Rod Kerr, Pei Tillman, Jonathan Dixon
- The Hills Shire Council: Tim Meaker, Lauren Vallejo, Ravi Singh, Craig Bourke, Craig Woods

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- Office of Environment and Heritage: Meredith Campey, Gus Pelosi, Daylan Cameron, Peter Scanes, Rebecca Swanson, Mladen Kovac
- Roads and Maritime Services: Mark Millington
- Parramatta Park and Western Sydney Parklands Trusts: David Kirkland, David Brodie

- Department of Primary Industries: Carla Ganassin, Karen Astles
- Sydney Olympic Park Authority: Kerry Darcovich
- Greater Sydney Local Land Services: Vanessa Keyzer, Bill Dixon

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Annie Nielson, Impeesa Bushcare
- Brian Powyer, Association of the Greening of
- Wayne Olling, Blacktown and District Environment Group Inc.
- Cathy Merchant, Ryde Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society
- Zoe Kapetangiannis, City of Canada Bay Sustainable City Committee

OUR LIVING RIVER AMBASSADORS

- Macquarie University: Dr Peter Davies
- University of New South Wales: Assoc. Prof. Stuart Khan
- University of Sydney: Assoc. Prof. Gavin Birch
- Western Sydney University: Dr Ian Wright
- Wests Tigers
- Royal Life Saving
- Cathy Merchant
- Charlene Bordley

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2016-2017

- James Smallson, City of Parramatta
- Phillip Birtles, Sydney Water
- Petrina Nelson, City of Canada Bay
- Simon Leiva, Strathfield Council

PRCG STAFF

- Sarah Clift, PRCG Coordinator*
- Jacinta Green, PRCG Riverkeeper*
- Lillian Hann, PRCG Communications Officer (until Feb 2017)*
- Nadia Young, PRCG Communications Officer (from April 2017)*
- Natalie Quinn, PRCG Masterplan Project Manager**

*Hosted by City of Parramatta

** Hosted by Sydney Water.

Images by Rosie Nicolai and Nadia Young.



OUR THANKS

Thank you to the City of Parramatta and Sydney Water for generously hosting the PRCG staff, and to all of our members and supporters for their dedicated efforts over the past year to make the river swimmable again.

FINANCIAL MEMBERS 2016-2017



Burwood Council
heritage • progress • pride



City of Canada Bay



CUMBERLAND COUNCIL



Sydney WATER



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS AND OTHER KEY CONTRIBUTORS



SydneyOlympicPark 





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