

PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT GROUP

# ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019



**Parramatta River**  
Catchment Group



**LET'S MAKE OUR RIVER  
SWIMMABLE AGAIN BY  
2025**



## A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR



The 2018-19 year has been a momentous one for the Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) with the finalisation and launch of the Parramatta River Masterplan in October 2018. The event was attended by more than 140 people

and celebrated the culmination of four years of strategic planning, research, community engagement and stakeholder collaboration.

A highlight of the launch was the announcement of the three new swim sites for the Parramatta River: Bayview Park, McIlwaine Park and Putney Park. I would like to thank all the individuals and organisations who contributed their time, expertise, local knowledge and feedback to the development of the Masterplan.

The Masterplan launch took place as part of the International Riversymposium, which was held in Sydney for the first time. The Parramatta River Masterplan was a finalist in the Thiess Australasian Riverprize and narrowly missed out to the equally worthy Whangawehi Catchment Management Group (WCMC) from New Zealand, who won this year's prize.

The second half of the year has been devoted to the implementation of the Masterplan, which is an exciting new phase for the PRCG and our partner agencies. Sydney Water has taken the lead to deliver the Masterplan and considerable progress has already been made in many of the Ten Steps to a Living River, including the launch of the Riverwatch monitoring program.

Throughout the year we have continued to engage and educate the community, especially during the popular Riverfest program. In 2018, we changed

the delivery model from a single event hosted by one council to a 10-day celebration of the river with more than 2,400 people taking part in 17 events held by 24 councils and community groups across the catchment.

We have also collaborated with our member councils and other catchment groups on projects such as our fifth *Get the Site Right* campaign in May, where we have achieved our best results to date with 63 per cent of sites found to be compliant – a 13 per cent increase on the previous campaign. This improvement highlights the importance of ongoing education and enforcement to prevent runoff from entering our local waterways.

In a year filled with so many highlights and achievements it is important that I acknowledge the contribution of Sarah Holland Clift who was the PRCG Coordinator for five years. During that time Sarah worked tirelessly to progress the Masterplan for the Parramatta River, securing the support of more the 35 partner agencies and raising awareness of the *Our Living River* initiative through her advocacy on issues affecting the river and catchment. Sarah finished in January 2019 and I thank her for her incredible passion and the dedication she brought to the PRCG and her role.

As we progress our delivery of the Masterplan, I wish to say a heartfelt thank you to all our member agencies, community groups and individuals for your contribution in 2018-19 and continued commitment to achieving our mission to make the Parramatta River swimmable again by 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Drury'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'M' and 'D'.

**Cr Mark Drury**  
Parramatta River Catchment Group Chair

*Cover image: artist impression of McIlwaine Park foreshore upgrade and Brays Bay river access improvements.*



# RECOGNITION OF THE RIVER'S TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the Parramatta River catchment area and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders living on the land today. Their lore, traditions and customs have led to the bountiful land, rivers and ocean we all enjoy today.

## THE PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT GROUP

The Parramatta River Catchment Group 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.





## Parramatta River Masterplan Launch

The Parramatta River Masterplan was launched on 18 October at The Connection in Rhodes, as part of the International Riversymposium and our annual Riverfest. More than 140 representatives from our member agencies and other related community groups attended the event.

Master of Ceremonies, gardening guru Costa Georgiadis, added his customary levity to the formalities and spoke passionately about the importance of making the river swimmable again.

Key speakers included: Member for Parramatta – Dr Geoff Lee, Sydney Water General Manager, Liveable City Solutions – Paul Plowman, PRCG Chair

– Cr Mark Drury, PRCG Deputy Chair – Cr Penny Pederson, City of Ryde Mayor – Jerome Laxale, City of Canada Bay Deputy Mayor – Cr Charles Jago and PRCG Coordinator – Sarah Holland Clift.

Guests were entertained by the dynamic Junkyard Beats who provided a high-energy routine using recycled items. The comical duo from Circus Solarus added a whimsical touch to the event with their colourful Hawaiian shirts and swimming accessories.

Finally, the moment arrived to announce the location of the three new swimming sites to be opened by 2025! Mayor Laxale and Cr Pederson revealed the new site at Putney Park, Putney, and Cr Jago unveiled





the sites at Bayview Park, Concord and McIlwaine Park at Rhodes East.

There was strong media interest in the Masterplan launch, generating over 150 syndicated media items across all platforms, including coverage in the news bulletins of all four television networks.

The launch was a fitting celebration of this important milestone and the considerable amount of work that went into the development of the Masterplan. A huge thank you to everyone who helped make the event such a successful and memorable day, and particularly to City of Canada Bay for providing the venue at short notice.



*Junkyard Beats in action*



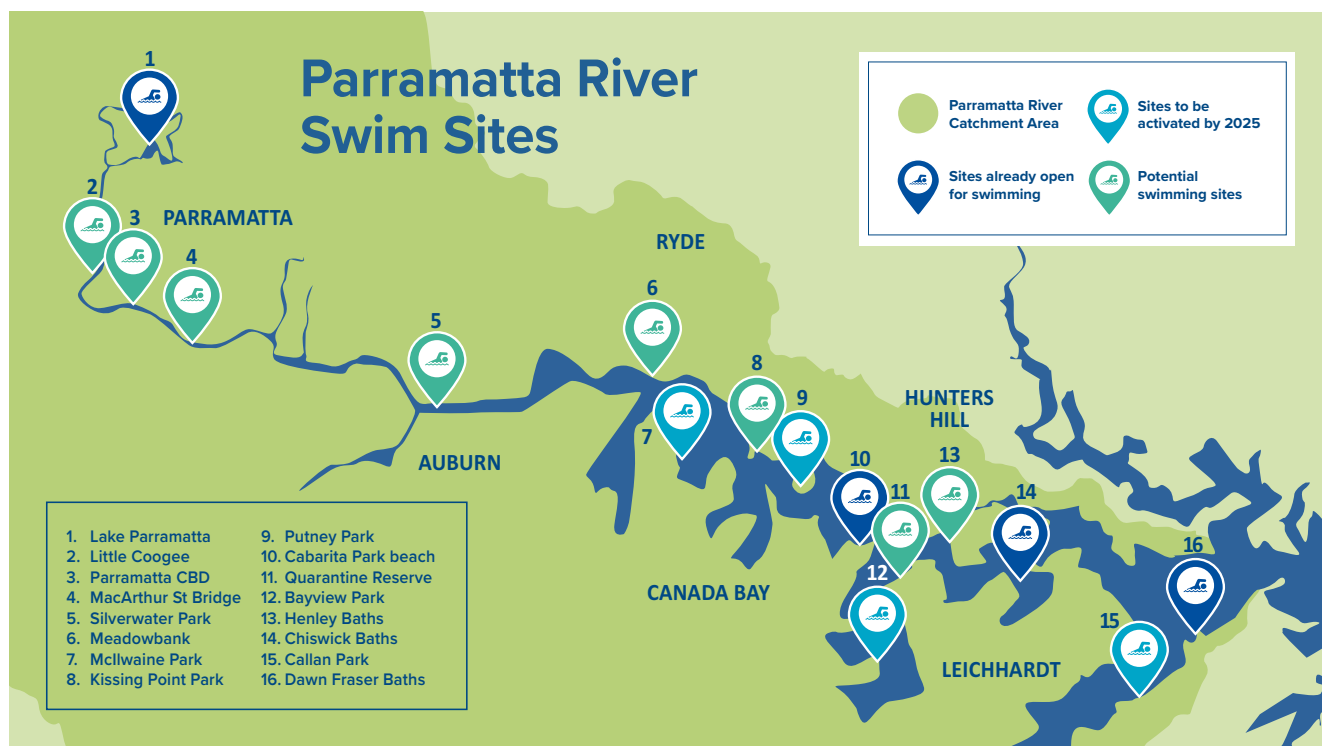
*Dr Geoff Lee, Member for Parramatta*



*Reveal of the McIlwaine Park swim site*



*PRCG team launches the Masterplan*



## CATCHMENT-WIDE PLANNING & RESEARCH

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

The Parramatta River Masterplan sets out our agreed actions to fulfill our mission to make the Parramatta River swimmable by 2025. It is based on extensive scientific research and community consultation, which has been undertaken over several years.

Following the completion of Stage 1 research and reports, Stage 2 focused on using the evidence gathered to make decisions on the actions, pathways and targets needed to form the final Masterplan.

### Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholders have been engaged at each step of the process due to the collaborative nature and structure of the PRCG. Numerous local and state government agencies have contributed financial and/or in-kind contributions towards elements of the plan, with Sydney Water and the EPA being the most significant financial contributors. Cross-agency technical groups have peer-reviewed each research project and the PRCG Full Group



*Costa Georgiadis at the Masterplan launch*

members has been given an opportunity to input at each quarterly PRCG Full Group meeting and at key stakeholder workshops.

We have also engaged with the community through online voting, surveys, events and community desirability workshops, as well as through community representation on the PRCG. Over 15,000 community members have been involved in at least some elements of the process.



In August 2018 the PRCG undertook community consultation on the Ten Steps to a Living River, which form the basis of the Parramatta River Masterplan. To support the consultation, we developed the *Ten Steps to a Living River brochure*, social media video, engagement survey and display materials.

Face-to-face engagement was held at seven community events across the Parramatta River catchment and online engagement was conducted via the Our Living River website, social media platforms and e-newsletter as well as several of our partner agency websites and 'Our Say' pages. People were invited to tell us what they think by completing our engagement survey and/or sharing their memories. Overall, survey responses and feedback was very supportive of the Masterplan recommendations.

The draft Parramatta River Masterplan was launched for public exhibition from 18 October to 29 November 2018 and was accompanied by an online survey. There were 194 responses to the online survey and seven formal submissions made by councils during the public exhibition period.

Results showed that there was significant support for the Masterplan with agreement on the achievability of the vision, the importance of a collaborative approach and an uptake of behaviours that would contribute to making the Parramatta River



swimmable again. A report summarising the public exhibition feedback of the Masterplan was produced and distributed in March 2019.

The updated Masterplan was reprinted and distributed in March 2019. Member agencies were invited to seek formal endorsement of the Masterplan within their own organisations.

We continue to engage with our stakeholders and the community on the delivery of the Masterplan through our regular meetings, events and communications channels.



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- ✓ Undertook face-to-face and online community consultation on the Ten Steps to a Living River.
- ✓ Parramatta River Masterplan Governance Working Group provided direction and guidance on the preferred governance model.
- ✓ Established the Masterplan Delivery Engine, led by Sydney Water, to coordinate the Ten Steps to a Living River.
- ✓ Completed the full economic analysis for the Masterplan.
- ✓ Completed Aboriginal Leadership project to support the Masterplan governance.
- ✓ Launched Parramatta River Masterplan for public exhibition from 18 October to 29 November 2018.
- ✓ Progress several Masterplan steps, including launch of the Riverwatch monitoring program and the design and construction plans for activation of planned swimming sites.
- ✓ Launched new Our Living River website and PRCG logo.
- ✓ Re-launched the Riverkeeper Network and increased membership.
- ✓ Expanded the Riverfest event to a 10-day celebration of the Parramatta River.

## Waterway Governance

In May 2018, the PRCG Full Group appointed Sydney Water as the lead agency to drive delivery of the Masterplan. At the Full Group meeting in September 2018, a collaborative governance arrangement was endorsed, building on the existing PRCG structure, to provide clarity on the roles of each stakeholder in delivering the Masterplan and strengthening the collaborative nature of the PRCG.

This collaborative governance model was developed and recommended by a cross-agency working group chaired by PRCG Vice Chair, Cr Penny Pedersen. The Masterplan Governance Working Group included representatives from all member councils as well as a representative from the Greater Sydney Commission, NSW Department of Planning and Environment, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, NSW Environment Protection Authority, NSW Health and Sydney Water.

There was a desire from all stakeholders for the PRCG to continue having an independent coordinating role, and that all agencies continue to have a major role in delivering the Masterplan. However, it was also recognised that a 'gear shift' was required as the Masterplan transitioned to implementation and agencies began to be identified to lead each of the ten Masterplan steps.

The working group was renamed the Masterplan Delivery Engine. The Masterplan Delivery Engine is a cross agency group, coordinated by Sydney Water,



*Masterplan Governance Working Group*

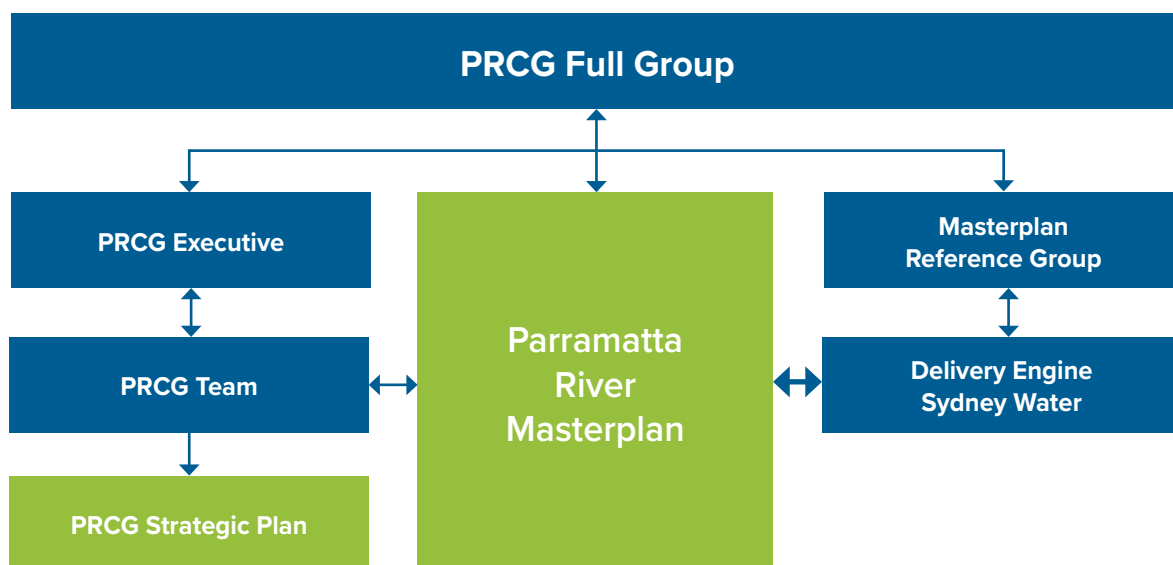
to drive delivery of the Masterplan. Sydney Water has provided additional resources in order to accelerate implementation of the Masterplan within the delivery timeframe.

The Delivery Engine takes strategic guidance from the Masterplan Reference Group, made up of senior staff from several local and state government agencies; however, it is ultimately accountable to the PRCG Full Group. A reporting 'dashboard' has been under development during 2019 that will provide a transparent and visual tool for monitoring and reporting on Masterplan progress.

In February 2019, Leanne Niblock was appointed as the Masterplan Delivery Engine Manager, based at Sydney Water. In April 2019 two further staff members commenced: Alex Michie as the Riverwatch Coordinator and Nerida Taylor as Strategic Stormwater Planner in Sydney Water.

The Delivery Engine team meets regularly with the PRCG team to plan and report on the progress of the Masterplan delivery.

### PARRAMATTA RIVER MASTERPLAN GOVERNANCE MODEL







Artist impression of foreshore upgrade at Putney Park

## Economic Impact Analysis

Building on the scoping study that was completed in 2017-18, a full economic impact analysis was conducted in 2018. The aim was to demonstrate the overall economic benefits of returning the Parramatta River to swimmable conditions and to inform the funding models and business case to deliver the Masterplan. The technical group overseeing this process included senior economists from OEH, EPA, DPE and Sydney Water and representatives from several councils.

The first phase of this analysis was a carefully designed and detailed choice modelling exercise to demonstrate the economic benefits of returning swimming to the Parramatta River. Marsden Jacobs were contracted to undertake this work, with funding support from both the NSW EPA and Sydney Water.

The second phase of the analysis was the development of a high level business case that summarised the overall costs and benefits and described how development might proceed over time, with consideration of all potential revenue streams.

Findings from the economic analysis indicated that:

- Direct investments in swimming sites can generate economic benefits and returns that exceed the initial and ongoing investment.
- There is an economic case for investing to improve and maintain water quality in good condition in the Parramatta River.
- Masterplan water quality investments are likely to generate broader economic benefits; however to demonstrate these benefits, water quality modelling needs to be extended to 2050.
- Understanding the long-term trajectory of the river under the BAU and mitigation scenarios is needed to support long-term city planning that is appropriate for a river of this significance.

The recommended next steps include:

- Monitoring recreation at existing and new sites between now and 2025 and use this evidence base to develop a clear understanding of recreational visit demand for new sites.
- Extending the water quality modelling from 2025 to 2050 and consider adding additional parameters to the analysis. Considering the long-term trajectory of the river under the BAU and mitigation scenarios will also demonstrate whether/when benefits of investments will become at risk if water quality continues to decline.
- Re-running the Parramatta River 'willingness to pay' survey at different time intervals.



## Aboriginal Leadership

A key gap highlighted at the PRCG Governance Workshop in early 2018 was the need for Aboriginal engagement and leadership to be included in the Masterplan. To address this gap, a Parramatta River Masterplan Aboriginal Leadership project was commissioned to undertake preliminary case study research on rivers across Australia and internationally and use this as a basis to develop and deliver specific Aboriginal engagement as part of the broader community engagement around the Masterplan.

Several key recommendations were developed:

- Further investigation and engagement with Aboriginal communities around the current proposed swimming areas, including on-site visits.
- Use of Aboriginal languages for locations, projects and policies and further engagement with the community to identify places, language and coordinating sites along the Parramatta River.
- Investigation of Indigenous procurement and business opportunities at proposed site locations.



These recommendations will provide the basis of an ongoing model of engagement with Aboriginal peoples around the river. As the first step towards implementing these recommendations, we incorporated Dharug language into the Masterplan document that included:

- a) the renaming the Masterplan to: *Duba, Budu, Barra (Land, Water, Sky): Ten Steps to a Living River – the Parramatta River Masterplan*; and
- b) a description of the river from an Aboriginal perspective as part of a whole living entity that connects land, water and sky.

Using this model, the naming of swimming sites and other features and projects along the river will occur as we progress with implementation, recognising that the Masterplan is a living document that will adapt and evolve over time.



*Dance performance at the Murama Healing Space 'Healing through Belonging' exhibition opening.*

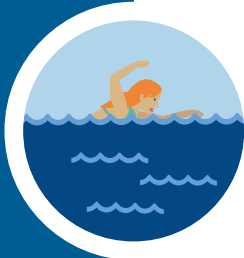






# TEN STEPS TO A LIVING RIVER

Following the governance review undertaken during 2018, the new Masterplan Delivery Engine was established in February 2019. This cross-agency group is focused on ensuring that the Masterplan is fully implemented. The key delivery highlights for 2018-19 are summarised below.



## 1. Get swimming

City of Parramatta undertook a user preference survey at Lake Parramatta during the 2018-19 swimming season. The information collected tells us about visitor attributes and behaviours and assists the Council in developing future actions that support visitation to the site.

Annual visitor data is now being collected for both patrolled swimming sites at Lake Parramatta and Dawn Fraser Pool. Lake Parramatta has reported an almost seven-fold increase in visitor numbers since opening in 2015.



## 2. Keep watch

Sydney Water prepared a Riverwatch water quality monitoring plan for new swimming sites at Putney Park, Mcllwaine Park and Bayview Park, to enable monitoring to commence at the beginning of 2019-20.

Beachwatch continued to monitor water quality at Chiswick Baths, Cabarita Park Beach, Dawn Fraser Baths and Callan Park, with the City of Parramatta monitoring Lake Parramatta.

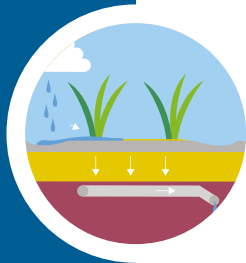


## 3. Create new swimming spots

The City of Ryde and City of Canada Bay have been progressing design and construction plans for activation of their swimming sites at Putney Park, Mcllwaine Park and Bayview Park. Together, both councils have committed around \$5.6 million to progress site activation, with plans to deliver new swimming sites well ahead of 2025.

Inner West Council has also been exploring the possibility of activating Callan Park as an additional priority swimming site and commenced work with the University of New South Wales and the Office of Environment & Heritage to understand potential site constraints.





## 4. Standardise the standards

For the first time, councils are required to prepare a Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) which will set out the 20-year vision for land-use in the local area, the special character and values that are to be preserved and how change will be managed into the future.

During March 2019, the City of Blacktown, City of Canada Bay, City of Parramatta and Sydney Water worked together to develop standard wording for catchment councils to include in their LSPSs. This information was developed to support councils in aligning the delivery of Parramatta River Masterplan outcomes with the Greater Sydney Commission's District Plans.



Work was also initiated with a specialist consultant to review planning provisions and provide model clauses that support implementation of the Parramatta River Masterplan. The outputs of this work will assist councils in developing their revised Local Environment Plans (LEPs) and Development Control Plans (DCPs) as well as examine options for a broader review of the NSW planning and policy framework to deliver a catchment-wide approach to managing stormwater impacts on the river.

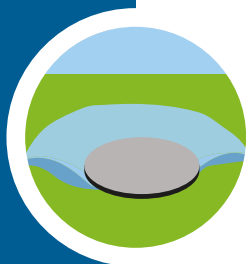


## 5. Reduce stormwater runoff

The City of Parramatta and Sydney Water scoped initial plans for this workstream, including agreeing that an initial period of data collection was required.

A stormwater survey was prepared by the City of Parramatta and distributed to catchment councils to understand how stormwater is being managed across the catchment. The survey has provided the basis for developing a more detailed action plan in partnership with stormwater experts across the catchment.

Mapping of stormwater treatment devices across the catchment also commenced, to help us understand the location, type and benefits of these devices. This data will help shape future decisions about where additional water sensitive urban design and stormwater treatment devices are best installed across the catchment.



## 6. Improve overflows

Sydney Water continued to plan for capital works in the Upper and Mid Parramatta River Catchment to reduce the impacts of stormwater on the wastewater network and reduce wastewater overflows into the river.

Planning and design of the regulatory framework for managing wet weather overflows was progressed between the EPA and Sydney Water.





## 7. Involve the community

The PRCG relaunched the Parramatta River Riverkeeper Network at an event on the river in the Parramatta CBD in April 2019.

The *Get the Site Right* education and regulatory campaign was held again during May 2019. A significant improvement in compliance rates was observed between repeat site inspections, targeting erosion and sediment control on residential and commercial building sites across Sydney and the Central Coast.

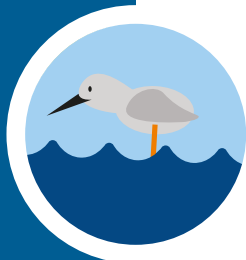
The PRCG continued to have a presence at a variety of community events to promote the Masterplan and other PRCG activities, including the expanded Riverfest program.



## 8. Bring in nature

Planning commenced for the delivery of a Citizen Science program to support implementation of Step 8.

The PRCG continued to support a number of biodiversity projects including the 1 Million Turtles Program and Living Seawalls project.



## 9. Report back regularly

Work commenced on the development of a reporting dashboard to track progress against Masterplan steps. Initial data for each step was collected and discussed at the PRCG Full Group meetings. This will be transitioned into an external facing dashboard on the PRCG website during 2019-20.



## 10. Create new leadership

Sydney Water was established as the lead coordinating agency to drive delivery of the Parramatta River Masterplan.

A Delivery Engine Manager, Riverwatch Coordinator and Strategic Stormwater Planner were recruited by Sydney Water in early 2019 to support Masterplan implementation. The team will work in partnership with councils, state government agencies and the PRCG to implement the Masterplan.







## Get the Site Right

The multi-award winning initiative, *Get the Site Right*, is a joint educational and compliance campaign that targets erosion and sediment control on construction and building sites and aims to raise awareness about the effects of sediment laden runoff on our waterways.

Launched by the PRCG in 2016, the campaign is now supported by the Cooks River Alliance, Georges River Riverkeeper, Sydney Coastal Councils Group, Lake Macquarie City Council, NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) and almost 20 councils.

During the May 2019 campaign council, EPA and DPIE officers conducted more than 1,110 inspections of commercial and residential building sites and found that 748 (63 per cent) of sites were compliant – a 13 per cent improvement on last year's figures. A total of \$290,700 in fines was issued to those sites that were found to be non-compliant.

Education continues to be a key driver of the campaign with an 86% improvement achieved in compliance rates on sites that were non-compliant on first visit and then had a repeat visit. There was also a 10% increase in the site managers' knowledge of erosion and sediment controls.

Results from the Blitz Day on 14 May showed that almost 30 per cent of all sites inspected and 25 per cent in fines issued during the full campaign occurred on the day. Compliance rates were also

slightly higher than the month-long average at 66 per cent, highlighting the value of a targeted and collaborative approach between other councils and catchment groups. A second Blitz Day is planned for October 2019 to maintain the level of awareness and compliance.

Get the Site Right was recognised at the 2018 Stormwater NSW Awards, receiving a Highly Commended Award in the 'Excellence in Policy and Education' category.



### KEY RESULTS

- ✓ 1,113 site inspections conducted
- ✓ 13% improvement in compliance
- ✓ 86% improvement in compliance rates on sites that were non-compliant on first visit and then had a repeat visit
- ✓ 10% increase in site managers' ESC knowledge
- ✓ \$290,700 in fines issued
- ✓ 2 x PRCG Regulatory Subcommittee planning and review meetings
- ✓ 2 x cross-catchment groups planning and review meetings.



# WORKING TOGETHER

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

## JOINT DECISION MAKING

**PRCG Executive Committee:** held six meetings in 2018-19 to guide the development of the Masterplan, determine priorities for the group and key budget decision planning for the Masterplan launch and implementation.

**Quarterly Full Group and Officer group:** meetings held with all PRCG member agencies and community representatives to discuss and agree upon our actions and goals for the river and catchment. Hosted by City of Canada Bay, Sydney Water, Cumberland Council and Sydney Olympic Park Authority.

**Masterplan Reference Group:** meetings held in November 2018 and May 2019 at Sydney Water to provide strategic guidance on the delivery of the Masterplan.

**Parramatta River Masterplan Governance Working Group:** formed to guide the delivery of the Masterplan Governance Model. The Working Group met twice prior to the formation of the Masterplan Delivery Engine in September 2019.

**Parramatta River Masterplan Aboriginal Leadership advisory group:** held meetings to discuss Aboriginal Leadership and Governance in the Masterplan. The PRCG engaged consultants from Shared Path to provide guidance.

**PRCG Regulatory Subcommittee:** met twice to discuss and plan Get the Site Right campaign. The subcommittee also identified key industrial areas across the catchment and commenced planning for a future joint campaign on chemical bunding on industrial sites.

**PRCG Education Subcommittee:** meeting was held on 27 February 2019 to further discuss cross-catchment education and community engagement campaigns such as the River Aware neighbourhood behaviour campaign and 2019 Riverfest.

**PRCG Biodiversity Subcommittee:** met on 9 August 2018, where they discussed monitoring

and reporting of their priority habitat corridors, brainstormed event ideas for Riverfest and discussed ideas for progressing Step 8: Bring in Nature of the Parramatta River Masterplan.

## FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS

**National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC):** the PRCG Coordinator received an invitation to join the NHMRC Recreational Water Quality Advisory Committee to oversee the revision of Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water (2008).

**Riversymposium:** four abstracts on topics relating to the Parramatta River Masterplan were presented at the 2018 International Riversymposium, in Sydney from 14-18 October 2018.



*Murama Healing Space team members*

**Aboriginal culture:** the PRCG Coordinator and Riverkeeper were invited members of the Murama Cultural Centre Advisory Council, an official working group that will provide strategic advice and oversight for Murama initiatives including development of the Murama Healing Space on the Parramatta River.

In partnership with Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA), the group was successful in receiving two grants from OEH's Heritage Near Me (for the Murama Cultural Heritage Initiative) and Create NSW (for the Western Sydney Making Spaces Initiative) for cultural and youth engagement activations.

## OUR NETWORK



### The Australasian Chapter of the International Erosion Control Association (AUSTIECA):

approached the PRCG requesting assistance to run an ESC forum for council compliance staff in the second half of 2019.

**2019 Stormwater NSW Conference:** PRCG's abstract submission entitled, 'Making the Parramatta River swimmable again: engaging the community to reduce stormwater and source pollution' has been accepted and will be presented by Nadia Young and Jo Taranto in August 2019.

**Invited presentation:** the PRCG Coordinator presented at the 11th Asia-Pacific Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development Meeting and Symposium on 26 September, 2018, hosted by Western Sydney University in collaboration with the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability.

## BUILDING CAPACITY

**Sydney's other catchment groups:** continued collaboration on shared issues affecting Sydney's waterways, such as the *Get the Site Right* education and compliance campaign.

**Parramatta River Masterplan Economic Analysis Technical Group:** was formed on 31 July 2018 for an inception meeting and a Workshop was held on 20 August 2018.

**Member and active participant of the Splash Steering Group:** Splash is a collaborative network that aims to build capacity in people and organisations around sustainability, liveability, productivity and climate resilience.



*Bud Lambeth (third from right) with staff from the NSW EPA and PRCG*

**PRCG Intern:** from November 2018 to February 2019 the PRCG hosted Budjarn (Bud) Lambeth, a young Aboriginal man studying Environmental Science at Macquarie University for two days per week as part of the EPA's Career Trackers program.

**PRCG Work Experience:** from 13-17 May 2019, the PRCG hosted a year 10 Crestwood High School student in Baulkham Hills. The student was involved in bush care and community engagement activities, including the recording of a new podcast episode with Ocean Protect.

## COLLABORATING ACROSS CATCHMENTS

**Coastal Zone Management Plan:** annual review of actions completed and publicly reported on the Our Living River website.

PRCG representation on the **Sydney Harbour Estuary Processes Study Technical Group and Splash Steering Committee.**

Member of the **Greater Sydney Local Land Services Community Advisory Group.**





## Parramatta River Catchment Group

The new PRCG logo was launched in July 2018. The design incorporates three key elements: the Parramatta River and its tributaries; the Bar-tailed Godwit, one of the five iconic species that are indicators of waterway health; and the green leaf that represents the catchment and its ecosystems. The circular shape symbolises the interdependence of all elements.

### COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING

**Parramatta River Masterplan:** The Masterplan dashboard is currently under development and will provide a transparent and visual process for monitoring and reporting on the progress of the Masterplan.

**Environmental Health Risk Assessment methodology for proposed Parramatta River swimming sites:** joint meeting with UNSW, NSW EPA and NSW Health in July 2018.

**Water and sediment quality upon request from Inner West Council:** Professor Stuart Khan of UNSW has developed a proposal for how chemical contaminants will be assessed at proposed swimming sites. The proposal entitled, *Environmental Health Risk Assessment for Proposed Parramatta River Swim Sites: Chemical contaminants*, has been reviewed by the EPA and NSW Health, and provides an approved framework for the assessment of new swimming sites. We thank Stuart for all the in-kind hours he has contributed to this project.

**Riverwatch Monitoring:** Sydney Water has commenced water quality monitoring at the three priority swimming sites identified in the Masterplan – Bayview Park, Concord, McIlwaine Park, Rhodes East and Putney Park, Putney. This monitoring forms the initial phase of a broader Riverwatch water quality monitoring program being developed by Sydney Water for the Parramatta River.

**Coastal Zone Management Program:** The PRCG is working with relevant agencies to understand how the Coastal Zone Management Program process fits with the Parramatta River Masterplan.

**Ongoing reporting:** Progress is regularly reported to our stakeholders and community via *The Current* (internal stakeholder) e-newsletter, *Our Living River* (community facing) e-newsletter, social media platforms, website and PRCG Full Group meetings.

### ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES

**Our Living River website:** ([www.ourlivingriver.com.au](http://www.ourlivingriver.com.au)) The new website went live on 12 July 2018 to coincide with the community consultation phase on our *Ten Steps to a Living River*. The centrepiece of the new website is a comprehensive, interactive map where users can access information on a wide range of things to do on the Parramatta River, from swimming sites and cycling paths to sightseeing attractions, Rivercat wharves and bushcare groups.

**Riverkeeper Network program:** relaunched to support community river care activities and complement council education programs by focusing on private lands across the catchment.

**Regular communications:** delivered to our communities via joint media campaigns, hard copy materials and online resources.



### INDUSTRY AWARDS



*Greater Sydney Planning Awards*

**2019 Greater Sydney Planning Awards:** Certificate of Commendation in the 'Great Community Collaboration' category for the Parramatta River Masterplan.

**2018 Thiess Australasian Riverprize:** Finalist for the Parramatta River Masterplan.

**2018 Stormwater NSW Awards:** Highly Commended – Excellence in Policy and Education category for *Get the Site Right*.

# Riverkeeper Network

The Riverkeeper program was first launched in 2016 with funding from the Greater Sydney Local Land Services and Landcare NSW Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative. The grants for the Riverkeeper program finished in June 2019 and the PRCG has reapplied for a further funding commitment from 2019-2023 to allow the program to continue.

In September 2018 Joanne Taranto replaced Jacinta Green as Riverkeeper. We thank Jacinta for the knowledge and passion she brought to her role to establish the Riverkeeper Network.

During 2018-2019, the Riverkeeper Network participated in a range of events and activities:

**Riverkeeper Supported Events:** An engagement and relaunch in February 2019 with a community event in Parramatta.

**Community Presentations:** held with PLC Sydney, Ryde Environmental Educators' Network and Baulkham Hills Proboscis Club.

**Community Partnerships:** The Riverkeeper program collaborated on projects with Muramba Healing Space, Living Seawalls (Sydney Institute of Marine Science), 1 Million Turtles (Western Sydney University), PLC Sydney, Oatlands Golf Club and ParraParents.

**Riverkeeper Network:** There are currently 115 Riverkeepers who have signed up online, six ambassadors and 10 affiliate organisations. The Riverkeeper Network Facebook group was created in January 2019 and has 40 members who share activities they are undertaking around the catchment.

**River Aware:** The River Aware street campaign is set for launch in the catchment in July 2019. Digital assets, flyers and content will be made available for all councils to use and share.

The Riverkeeper also proudly represented the PRCG at the following events:

- Local Landcare Coordinator State Gathering – 18-20 March 2019
- SOPA's Parklands Future Directions Workshop – 2 May 2019
- Australian Water Association OzWater Conference – 7-9 May 2019
- Ocean Protect Podcast – 17 May 2019
- Rethinking the Urban Forest Conference – 24 May 2019
- NSW EPA Litter Congress – 28 May 2019



*Riverkeeper talk at PLC Sydney*



*Riverkeeper Network Relaunch in Parramatta*



*River Aware pilot launch in Mortlake*



*Clean Up Australia Day*





2018 Thies Australasian Riverprize finalist

## COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

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

Throughout 2018-2019, the PRCG engaged with broad audiences and communities throughout the catchment, through a wide range of communications events and activities:

### PROFESSIONAL EVENTS

The PRCG Coordinator was on the organising committee for the 2018 International Riversymposium, which was held in Sydney for the first time. As part of the Riverexpo held throughout the four-day conference, the PRCG hosted an information stand with the City of Parramatta, RPS Group and Jacobs Engineering Group.

The PRCG also facilitated a dedicated 1.5 hour Learn Inspire Transform (LIT) Parramatta River Masterplan presentation at the International Riversymposium on 17 October, which attracted a large audience of delegates.

The session was facilitated by Phill Birtles, with presentations by Cr Mark Drury (PRCG Chair), Ben Bowen (Shared Path Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation), Sarah Clift (PRCG Coordinator), Giselle Howard (EPA), David Knights



Riversymposium LIT presenters

(McGregor Coxall), Lydia Cetin (Jacobs), Jonathon Dixon (Sydney Water) and Anne-Marie Mitchell (on behalf of RPS Group). The presentation finished with a dynamic panel discussion.

Following the launch of the Parramatta River Masterplan, the PRCG hosted a study tour for Riversymposium delegates as well as member agency representatives. The tour included visits to Lake Parramatta, the Murama Healing Space at Sydney Olympic Park and the Powells Creek naturalisation project in North Strathfield.

## OTHER EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Throughout 2018-2019, the PRCG took part in several other community events, including:

- Burramatta Festival – 15 July 2018
- Beat the Bottle – 22 July 2018
- National Tree Day – 29 July 2018
- Powell's Creek Naturalisation Open Day – 4 August
- Innovation Games – 18 August 2018
- Cherry Blossom Festival Garden Day – 21 August
- City of Ryde's World Water Day kayak event – 22 March 2019
- Murama 'Healing through Belonging' Launch – 1 June 2019
- Ryde Sustainability Festival – 2 June 2019

Our Living River was also represented on council stalls at:

- City of Canada Bay's Ferragosto – 19 August 2018
- Inner West Council's Footprints EcoFestival – 26 August 2018
- Riverfest 2018 events
- Parramatta North Heritage Festival – 18 May 2019
- Greater Sydney Landcare Network's Grooving Grassroots Festival – 25 May 2019



*Cumberland Council's Sydney Cherry Blossom Festival*



*City of Ryde's World Water Day kayaking tour*



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



20+ community events



150+ syndicated media items



1400+ followers across Our Living River social media platforms; 50+ posts/tweets per month; 200+ average reach per post; 40+ average engaged users per post



760+ active e-newsletter subscribers



New *Our Living River* website: 36,600+ page views and 16,500+ sessions by 11,400+ users to date



115 Riverkeepers



6 Riverkeeper Ambassadors



10 Affiliate Organisations



40 Riverkeeper Network Facebook group members



*City of Canada Bay's Spring Clean at Halliday Park*



*City of Parramatta's North Parramatta Heritage Festival*



## Riverfest 2018

The PRCG's first, annual community event *Riverfest* was launched in 2016 as a single event hosted by the City of Ryde at Putney Park. In 2018 it was expanded to a 10-day celebration across the catchment from 12-21 October, showcasing the many and diverse ways people can enjoy the Parramatta River and its surrounds.

The festival was a huge success, with more than 2,400 people taking part in 17 community events and activities, organised by 24 councils and community groups.

Events included the inaugural Masters NSW Trial Open Water Swim at Lake Parramatta, river cruise, bush and river foreshore clean-ups, children's science and art workshops, and even yoga in the park!

Riverfest also coincided with the International *Riversymposium*, where conference delegates had the opportunity to attend the Parramatta River Masterplan launch and study tour, which showcased how we are making the river swimmable again.

For other Riverfest events, the PRCG provided a central coordination and communications role, but individual members and partners planned and executed their own events across the catchment.

A big thank you goes to Blacktown City Council, City of Canada Bay, City of Parramatta, City of Ryde, Hunters Hill Council, and The Hills Shire Council for hosting events as well as the many community groups that took part for the first time.

Events such as Riverfest will continue to play a vital role in celebrating the Parramatta River and promoting the many ways the community can be involved. We look forward to repeating this model for the running of Riverfest again next year and invite other councils and community groups to participate.



*Parramatta River Study Tour, Lake Parramatta*



*Masters NSW Trial Open Water Swim, Lake Parramatta*



*Spring Clean at Halliday Park, Five Dock*





***Become a Water Warrior, Lake Woodcroft***



***DSA Dragon Boating Open Day***



***Parramatta River Study Tour, Powells Creek***



***'Mind Your Mangroves' Parramatta River Cruise***



# ADVOCACY

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

During 2018-2019, the PRCG made submissions to the planning of future policies impacting the environment and waterways:



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- ✓ The Greater Sydney Commission Environment Commissioner, Rod Simpson, sits on the Parramatta River Masterplan Reference Group to help ensure alignment and integration into State planning.
- ✓ The Greater Sydney Commission Environment Commissioner, participated in the Governance Working Group workshop, and requested a joint meeting with PRCG and the NSW Coastal Council to discuss the Parramatta River Masterplan and its alignment with the Coastal Management Reforms.
- ✓ A joint Sydney catchment groups meeting (in partnership with the Cooks River Alliance, Georges Riverkeeper and Sydney Coastal Councils Group) was held with the Hon. Tony Burke MP, Shadow Minister for Environment and Water, to discuss his proposed National Urban Rivers and Corridors Policy.
- ✓ A briefing note from all four catchment groups was sent to the Hon. Anthony Albanese MP, Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development, to emphasise the importance of water as a focal point in his proposed National Cities Policy Platform.
- ✓ The Parramatta River Masterplan Reference Group requested a funding commitment from candidates in the 22 State seats across the NSW state electorate.
- ✓ Meetings with with Dr Geoff Lee (Member for Parramatta) and Penny Sharpe (Opposition Environment Minister) to support crucial components of the Masterplan including the RiverWatch program, PRCG Citizen Science and Education and Compliance Officer and infrastructure at the four new proposed swim sites.
- ✓ PRCG has welcomed commitments by both major parties towards funding increases to Landcare NSW programs.
- ✓ PRCG met with a representative of Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) and successfully lobbied for aspects of the Masterplan, including water engagement models and public access of foreshore, to be considered in the Architectural Briefing for the design of the new precinct.

### Other Notable Achievements

City of Canada Bay endorsed the nomination of Bayview Park and Brays Bay in the Parramatta River Masterplan as sites to be made swimmable by 2025. The Brays Bay site is backed by a \$5 million 'river activation' grant from the Department of Planning and Environment.



Artist impression of swim site activation at Bayview Park, Concord

# MONITORING AND REPORTING

## PRCG FINANCIAL REPORT (2018-19)

INCOME	\$
Carry over – Member funds	158,640
Annual membership fees	212,032
Carry over – EPA Masterplan Contribution Economic Analysis	80,000
Carry over – Sydney Water Contribution to Masterplan Economic Analysis	50,000
Carry over – City of Parramatta Council contribution to Masterplan media and communications	10,000
Carry over – Local Landcare Coordinator grant	10,335
2018-19 Grant Funds (Local Landcare Coordinator)	50,000
Carry over – Community Landcare Grant (River Aware)	7,180
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$578,187</b>

EXPENSES	\$
Salaries and on-costs (Coordinator 0.6 FTE & Comms 0.6 FTE)	149,580
Salaries and on-costs (Riverkeeper 0.6 FTE)	39,081
Materials (printing, signage)	7,649
Contracts (consultancies, professional services)	178,768
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$375,078</b>

<b>NET OPERATING RESULT</b>	<b>\$203,109</b>
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We regularly report on progress to our stakeholders and community via our website, e-newsletter, social media channels and meetings.



# OUR REPRESENTATIVES

## CHAIR

Cr Mark Drury – Inner West Council

## VICE CHAIR

Cr Penny Pedersen – City of Ryde

## COUNCILLORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

- Blacktown City Council: Cllr Susai Benjamin
- City of Canada Bay: Mayor Angelo Tsirekas, Cr Charles Jago
- City of Canterbury Bankstown: Cr George Zakhia
- City of Parramatta: Cr Phil Bradley, Cr Patricia Prociw
- City of Ryde: Cr Jerome Laxale, Cr Penny Pedersen, Cllr Edwina Clifton
- Cumberland Council: Cr Glenn Elmore, Cr Ross Grove
- Hunters Hill Council: Cr Ross Williams
- Inner West Council: Cr Mark Drury, Cr Marghanita Da Cruz
- Strathfield Council: Cr Matthew Blackmore, Cr Maryanne Duggan

## PARRAMATTA RIVER MASTERPLAN REFERENCE GROUP

- Cr Mark Drury, Chair – Parramatta River Catchment Group
- Cr Penny Pedersen, Vice Chair – Parramatta River Catchment Group
- Kevin Young, Managing Director – Sydney Water
- Paul Plowman, General Manager – Liveable City Solutions, Sydney Water
- Rod Simpson, Environment Commissioner – Greater Sydney Commission
- Phillip Birtles, Urban Water and Waterways Manager – Sydney Water
- Daylan Cameron, Senior Team Leader, Water Floodplains & Coast, Greater Sydney – Office of Environment & Heritage
- Stephen Corbett, Director, Centre for Population Health, Western Sydney Local Health District – NSW Health
- Yolanda Gil, Director, Greater Parramatta Urban Renewal – Department of Planning & Environment
- James Goodwin, Director, Sydney Industry – Environment Protection Authority
- Giselle Howard, A/Chief, Environmental Regulator – Environment Protection Authority
- Mladen Kovac, Director, Economics – Office of Environment and Heritage
- Petrina Nelson, Open Space Planning Coordinator – City of Canada Bay

## STAFF REPRESENTATIVES OF MEMBER AGENCIES

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

- Blacktown City Council: Tahina Ahmend, Amanda Or, Eric Brandao, Craig Bush, Kristy Good, Yael Lang, Keysha Milenkovic, Tony Napoli, Kerry Robinson, Aditi Verma
- Burwood Council: Pablo Barreto, Tet Lim, Andrew McClure, Kundan Pokharel, Tai Trinh
- City of Canada Bay: Ju'eta Amir, Renae Barnes, Petrina Nelson, Wendy Wright
- City of Canterbury Bankstown: Khal Asfour, David Dekel, Joanne McDonnell, Charmaine Robertson, Daniela Santucci
- City of Parramatta: Paul Hackney, Glenn Haskins, Patrick Haydon, Lisa Kollaras, Paul Lyth, Helen Papathanasiou, Stuart Pike, Steven Ross, James Smallson, Jeffrey Stein, Pino Todarello
- City of Ryde: Liz Berger, Sam Cappelli, Michelle Carter, Katie Helm, Kylie McMahon, Craig Redfern
- Cumberland Council: Nicole Collas, Kerrie Davies, Rita Milostnik, Nyambura Mwankiki, Stuart Nunn, Greg O'Donnell, Stewart Rodham
- Hunters Hill Council: Cate Alder, Mark Bennett, Jacqui Vollmer
- Inner West Council: Jean Brennan, John Duncombe, Helen Knowles, Deborah Lennis, Sarah Kamarudin
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment: Chase Dingle, Michael Frankcombe, Anthony Pizzolato
- NSW Environment Protection Authority: Jane Burgett, Giselle Howard
- Strathfield Council: Mark Latham, William Oslan, Cameron Ross, Patrick Wong
- Sydney Water: Phillip Birtles, Amanda Chimkievitch, Jonathon Dixon, Rodd Kerr, Hannah Lockie, Anne-Marie Mitchell, Ramesh Seneviratne

## ASSOCIATE MEMBERS AND KEY CONTRIBUTORS

- Department of Primary Industries: Carla Ganassin
- Greater Sydney Local Land Services: Robert Adam
- Greater Sydney Landcare Network: Jeff Cottrell
- 100 Resilient Cities Program: Beck Dawson

- Office of Environment and Heritage: Meredith Campey, Peter Freewater, Mladen Kovac
- Parramatta Park and Western Sydney Parklands Trusts: David Kirkland
- Roads and Maritime Services: Mark Millington
- Sydney Olympic Park Authority: Kerry Darcovich, Jenny O'Meara, Swapan Paul

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Frank Breen – Ryde Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society
- Zoe Kapetangiannis – City of Canada Bay Sustainable City Committee
- Antony Lewis – Blacktown and District Environment Group Inc.
- Douglas Meredith – Bidjigal Reserve Trust
- Annie Nielsen – Impreesa Bushcare
- Brian Powyer – Association of the Greening of

## OUR LIVING RIVER AMBASSADORS

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

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2017-2018

- Charles Agnew – Sydney Water
- Jean Brennan – Inner West Council
- Petrina Nelson – City of Canada Bay
- James Smallson – City of Parramatta

## PRCG STAFF

- Sarah Clift, PRCG Coordinator (2014-18)
- Simon Pearsall, Acting PRCG Coordinator (March-May 2019)
- Jacinta Green, PRCG Riverkeeper (2016-2018)
- Joanne Taranto, PRCG Riverkeeper (2018-)
- Nadia Young, PRCG Communications Officer
- Jessica Datt, PRCG Administration Support Officer (Sept-Dec 2019)

Images by Nadia Young and Chris Frape.



## OUR THANKS

Thank you to the City of Parramatta for generously hosting the PRCG staff from 2013-2019, and to all of our members and supporters for their dedicated efforts over the past year to make the Parramatta River swimmable again.

### FINANCIAL MEMBERS 2018-2019



### ASSOCIATE MEMBERS AND OTHER KEY CONTRIBUTORS







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