

The iconic Parramatta River

The Parramatta River is the main tributary of Sydney Harbour. Its catchment area covers 266 square kilometres and is home to a diverse and rapidly growing community of more than 750,000 people.

The river was once a popular swimming location and the focal point of many social activities. By the 1950s, lack of regulation and rapid industrial development led to the river becoming heavily polluted and most swimming sites being closed.

With improved regulation, technology and community awareness over the last 20 years, the condition of the river has been improving and swimming has become a possibility once again.

What we are doing to make more sites safe for swimming

The Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) is an alliance of local and state government agencies and community groups who are working together to make the Parramatta River swimmable again by 2025. The PRCG has developed an evidence-based Masterplan that outlines the steps needed to make more sites along the Parramatta River swimmable. Robust science, collaboration, cultural sensitivity and community decision making are at the heart of this plan to ensure that we deliver real outcomes for our living river and its communities.

Where is it safe to swim in the Parramatta River?

There are currently four sites safe for swimming in the Parramatta River (see map inserts for more information). Water quality indicators are routinely monitored at each of these sites through Beachwatch to demonstrate that they are safe for human contact. (visit: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/water/beaches/beachwatch-water-quality-program). Suitability for swimming is assessed following the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Waters 2008*. Swimming is not advised at any of the current sites for up to three days after heavy rain. Sydney Water has also commenced water quality monitoring at the three planned swimming sites identified in the Masterplan: Bayview Park, Concord, Mcllwaine 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.

Callan Park has also been identified as a possible swim site and will undergo further water and sediment quality testing to determine its suitability.



1. Lake Parramatta
Officially reopened for public swimming in 2015, this popular site is patrolled by lifeguards from late October to late March. Other amenities include non-motorised boat hire, walking trails, a children's playground, BBQ and picnic areas and a cafe.



10. Cabarita Park beach
Located at the northern end of Cabarita Park, the site features a long, wide strip of sand bordered by rocks at either end. The beach is backed by beautiful parklands with picnic and BBQ facilities, a playground, public toilets and wheelchair access.



14. Chiswick Baths
A quiet, local swimming site enclosed by a shark net and childproof fence, there are also picnic and toilet facilities. Swimming is permitted all year round except for up to three days after heavy rain.



7. Mcllwaine Park, Rhodes East
Positioned alongside Brays Bay Reserve, the area includes a restaurant and café, walkways, fenced toddler playground, BBQs, picnic facilities and toilets. The site will be used for kayaking and boating as part of City of Canada Bay's foreshore upgrade and river access project.



9. Putney Park, Putney
Popular for social gatherings, this scenic location includes playgrounds with a water splash play feature and a large picnic area. City of Ryde has proposed the construction of steps to activate the foreshore and provide greater access to the existing beach as part of the plan to make the site swimmable by 2025.



11. Bayview Park, Concord
Positioned on the western edge of Hen and Chicken Bay, the park has several BBQs and covered picnic tables, shared walking and cycling path, a water refill station and toilets. City of Canada Bay's site activation plan will include a netted enclosure extending to the south of the existing jetty.

Current swim sites	Not yet swimmable
● 1. Lake Parramatta	● 2. Little Coogee
● 10. Cabarita Park beach	● 3. Parramatta CBD
● 14. Chiswick Baths	● 4. MacArthur St Bridge
● 16. Dawn Fraser Baths	● 5. Silverwater Park
	● 6. Meadowbank
	● 8. Kissing Point Park
	● 12. Quarantine Reserve
	● 13. Henley Baths
Planned swim sites	
● 7. Mcllwaine Park	
● 9. Putney Park	
● 11. Bayview Park	
● 15. Callan Park	

Timeline of the Parramatta River

The Parramatta River has experienced a long and diverse history.



Aboriginal people use and enjoy the Parramatta River. British settlement commences in 1788.

1791 River modification begins, including planting of vineyards, citrus trees and other plants along the riverine landscape.

1830s Wetlands along the Parramatta River are drained and filled to create firm and arable land.

1850s Parramatta becomes a main metropolis.

1866 First ferry service begins with services often terminating at Rydalmere. Ferry trips to Parramatta cease in 1928 due to siltation and shallowing.



1880-1930s Twenty-two swimming baths are established along the Parramatta River. Rowing and sailing also become very popular with thousands of spectators at river events.

Early 1900s Industrialisation begins to see illegal dumping of soil and rubbish in the river.

1960s Water quality in the river becomes a health risk. Most river swimming baths close.

1970 Introduction of the Clean Waters Act to improve water quality. Increased awareness sees plans for river improvement and relocation of waterfront factories.

1989 Beachwatch established in response to public concern over the level of sewage at Sydney's ocean beaches.

1989-1994 Clean Waterways Program provides investment and coordination in waterway improvements.

Early 1990s The upper Parramatta River is dredged for ferry access. Rivercat service begins in 1993.

2005 Upper Parramatta River Catchment Trust resolves critical flooding issues in the upper catchment and works towards swimming at Lake Parramatta.



2006 Stormwater Management Service Charge introduced to allow additional stormwater management services to be undertaken in eligible areas.

2006 Commercial fishing ban for all areas west of the Sydney Harbour Bridge due to heavy metal accumulation in fish.

2008 The Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) is formed with the purpose of restoring and protecting the Parramatta River.

2015 Lake Parramatta is officially reopened for swimming 72 years after its closure.

2018 Launch of the Parramatta River Masterplan at the International Riversymposium.

2019 Riverwatch water quality monitoring commenced by Sydney Water at the three priority swimming sites identified in the Masterplan: Bayview Park, Mcllwaine Park and Putney Park.

2020 Putney Park site planned to open.

2021 Bayview Park and Mcllwaine Park sites planned to open.

Ten ways you can help the River

We all have a role in making the Parramatta River swimmable again.
Here are 10 simple ways that you can help do your bit.



1. Start swimming or enjoying our living river in other ways

It's a great way to show your support.



2. Pick up your pet waste

No one wants to swim in that!



3. Create less rubbish and put it in the right bin

Or you might end up swimming in it.



4. Get your site right

And keep dirt, sand, chemicals and other waste out of our drains.



5. Join a Bushcare group or plant a habitat garden

And provide homes for our mascots.



6. Install a rainwater tank or raingarden

And use the rain where it falls.



7. Become a Riverkeeper

Have fun while helping us deliver our plan for the river.



8. Check your plumbing

And stop rainwater going into the sewer.



9. Call the Environment Line on 131 555

To report pollution incidents.



10. Take the 'River Aware' pledge

And commit to adopting five simple actions.



LET'S MAKE OUR RIVER
SWIMMABLE AGAIN BY
2025

www.ourlivingriver.com.au

Top image: Drawn by J. Eyre; engraved by P. Slaeger [sic], A native camp near Cockle Bay, New South Wales with a view of Parramatta River, taken from Dawes's Point, National Library of Australia, nla.obj-135782267.

Parramatta River Swim Report



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