

PARRAMATTA RIVER CATCHMENT GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020



Parramatta River
Catchment Group



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

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, creeks and rivers 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.

Cover image: City of Ryde's Riverfest 2019 Parramatta River Kayaking Tour.

A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR



It would be fair to say that 2019-2020 has been a challenging year for all of us. Like many organisations, the Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) has had to establish new ways of working together and embracing technology during the COVID-19 pandemic. This

period has provided us with a unique opportunity to explore different approaches and platforms to engage with our communities.

The year was also one of transition as we moved to our new host council, City of Canada Bay, in July 2019. I would like to thank the City of Parramatta for their commitment and support during the six years they hosted the PRCG.

Several staff changes took place this year. The organisation was without a Coordinator for several months and I wish to thank Nadia Young and Joanne Taranto for continuing to progress key projects and manage the office relocation during that time.

In August we welcomed Nell Graham as the new PRCG Coordinator. Nell has worked in Local Government for more than 18 years and her extensive experience facilitating community participation in natural resource management programs has already proven to be an asset to the PRCG.

In November 2019 the Masterplan Delivery Engine Manager, Leanne Niblock, went on maternity leave. Nerida Taylor stepped up to act in the manager's role and her position as Strategic Stormwater Planner was filled by Philip Adams. The Riverwatch Coordinator, Alex Michie, took up a rural position with Water NSW in May 2020 and was replaced by Daniel Bradley. We thank them all for their valuable contribution.

In February 2020 we also farewelled our Rivekeeper, Joanne Taranto. Jo brought a wealth of community engagement expertise and enthusiasm to her role and will be missed by all.

Throughout the year, progress has been made on several steps of the Parramatta River Masterplan. Work continued on the establishment of three new swim sites at Bayview Park, McIlwaine Park and Putney Park. The Sydney Water Delivery Engine team completed one year of water quality monitoring data for our swim sites. This data informs the model that is used to establish when it is safe to swim after

rain, and is required before a site can be opened for swimming.

Significant progress has also been made on the development of a Draft Recommendations Paper for Step 4: Standardise the Standards. The paper sets out clear policy objectives for councils and state government agencies to adopt regarding stormwater quality, waterways and riparian lands.

We continue to collaborate with our member councils and other catchment groups on projects such as the *Get the Site Right* campaign. Due to COVID-19 the June 2020 campaign was conducted primarily online and targeted the community due to the increase in home renovation and DIY projects during the lockdown period.

We also partnered with the Sydney Coastal Councils Group to plan for a Greater Sydney Harbour Coastal Management Program, attending Steering Committee meetings, a partners group and accepting an invitation to join the Project Team. The PRCG also assisted with the production of a video that explains the need for all agencies to be involved in the development of a Coastal Management Program.

This year's *Riverfest* continued with the successful 10-day program that was established in 2018. More than 1,300 people took part in 25 events held by six councils and community groups across the catchment.

A key highlight of this year was winning the Planning Category of the 2019 Stormwater NSW Awards for the Parramatta River Masterplan. The award is a fitting acknowledgement of the extensive collaboration, planning and hard work that went into the Masterplan and a testament to the results that are being achieved through its implementation.

As we continue our efforts to make the Parramatta River swimmable again, I would like to thank Cr Penny Pedersen who is a critical part of the leadership of the PRCG. Her wise counsel and wit are especially valued. I also thank each and every one of you for your ongoing commitment and support to realise this important and worthwhile goal.

Councillor Mark Drury
Parramatta River Catchment Group Chair



CATCHMENT-WIDE PLANNING & RESEARCH

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

Throughout 2019-20, the Parramatta River Catchment Group collaborated with our member organisations, research partners and community groups on a wide range of initiatives and projects, and also took part in several stakeholder events and workshops.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Sydney Water Tours of Parramatta River

In early 2020, the PRCG team attended two tours of Parramatta River swim sites organised by Sydney Water. Guests included Sydney Water members and senior executives from SOPA, Transport for NSW, EPA, DPIE Water, Greater Sydney Commission, Canada Bay, Strathfield and Blacktown Councils.

The group visited Lake Parramatta, Putney Park and Bayview Park where representatives from each of these councils spoke about the history of the sites and their plans to activate them. The events allowed delegates to meet each other in a relaxed setting and learn more about the Parramatta River Masterplan.

Masterplan Reference Group

The Masterplan Reference Group was established to drive the research and planning of the Masterplan. The group is comprised of senior agency executives who advise the Sydney Water Delivery Engine. Since moving

into the implementation phase of the Masterplan, a review of the group's purpose and structure is being conducted to ensure the right representatives from key government agencies are involved to assist with progressing its delivery.

Aboriginal leadership and culture

During 2019-20 the PRCG Coordinator presented to the City of Parramatta Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee on the Parramatta River Masterplan, as part of a strategy to contact all member councils with Aboriginal Advisory Committees to facilitate opportunities for collaboration.

The PRCG continues to work with the Murama Healing Space on developing projects to raise awareness of the Aboriginal history and connection to the Parramatta River catchment. In 2019, the PRCG Coordinator was invited to join the Murama Cultural Centre Advisory Council, an official working group that provides strategic advice and oversight for Murama initiatives.

The PRCG team was also privileged to attend the opening of the Murama Healing Space Dance Ground at Sydney Olympic Park, and take part in a video that Murama produced for National Reconciliation Week.

PLANNING AND RESEARCH

Standardise the Standards

– Draft Recommendations Paper

Over the past 12 months Sydney Water has worked with staff from our member agencies, and specialist consultancy Civille, on the development of a draft recommendations paper for Step 4: Standardise the Standards.

The paper takes a whole of catchment approach in identifying planning policies and statutory planning mechanisms that support a swimmable river. As at the end of June 2020, a final draft Recommendations Paper was circulated within the Policy Control Group, and is expected to be published by late 2020.

Riverwatch Monitoring Program

Sydney Water continued water quality monitoring for microbial contaminants at Bayview Park, Mcllwaine Park and Putney Park. EnRisk was also contracted to develop a Human Health Risk Assessment Framework that has now been endorsed by NSW Health, DPIE and the Swim Site Activation Technical Working Group. The framework underpins the chemical assessments which will be undertaken at each of the priority swimming sites.

In May 2020 work also started on the update of the Interactive Map on the *Our Living River* website. Once completed, the map will feature links to Riverwatch water quality monitoring data for planned swim sites and a link to Beachwatch for current sites.

Coastal Management Program

In 2020 the PRCG Coordinator was invited to join the Greater Sydney Harbour Coastal Management Program (GSHCMP) Project Team. Founded by the Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG) the program aims to deliver a holistic and collaborative approach to waterway catchment management to address the potential adverse impacts of population growth and progression of climate change.

The PRCG Communications Officer also advised on the production of an educational video that provides an overview of the GSHCMP.

Regional Litter Prevention Strategy Grant

The SCCG and PRCG have applied for a \$90,000 grant from the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in the Own It and Act: Round 6 Community Litter Grant funding stream. The grant will fund the development of a Regional Litter Prevention Strategy (RLPS) for the Greater Sydney Harbour catchment.

Student research

The PRCG hosted three Macquarie University students to undertake research project placements as part of the university's PACE (Professional and Community Engagement) program.

Riparian Mapping: two students mapped riparian corridors of the Parramatta Catchment to increase protection and identify key areas for restoration. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, they were limited to desktop study that included the use of GIS (geographic information system) and aerial photography of the area being studied as part of their analysis.

Citizen Science: the Masters student reviewed and compared historical data of species sightings from the Parramatta CBD and Lake Parramatta with recent data available on Bionet. Due to COVID-19, Senior Scientist Eren Turak from DPIE provided specialist sound recordings of fauna from both locations which he collected during the project period. The student then used this information to produce a local citizen science app that will eventually be expanded for use across the entire Parramatta River catchment and customised for biodiversity monitoring until 2025.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- ✓ Progressed several Masterplan steps, including community consultation for planned swim sites and a Draft Recommendations Paper for Step 4: Standardise the Standards.
- ✓ Participated in Sydney Water's tours of the Parramatta River with representatives from key government agencies.
- ✓ Collaborated with SCCG to commence planning of a regional approach to waterway management and litter prevention strategy for Greater Sydney Harbour.
- ✓ Progressed Aboriginal cultural engagement and leadership activities that contribute to improved waterway governance.
- ✓ Launched the Masterplan Dashboard on the *Our Living River* website to provide regular updates on each of the ten Masterplan steps.
- ✓ Commenced work on a citizen science app for biodiversity monitoring across the Parramatta River catchment.



Sydney Water Tank Stream Tour

WORKING TOGETHER

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

JOINT DECISION MAKING

Quarterly Full Group and Officer Group: meetings held with all PRCG member agencies and community representatives to discuss and agree upon actions and goals for the river and catchment and Masterplan implementation. Meetings were hosted by Inner West Council, City of Parramatta, City of Ryde and two meetings were delivered online.

PRCG Executive Committee: held six meetings in 2019–20 to determine priorities for the PRCG, make key budget decisions and support the review of the PRCG Strategic Plan.

Masterplan Reference Group: One meeting was held in October 2019 to provide strategic guidance on the delivery of the Masterplan.

Regulatory Subcommittee: met twice to discuss and plan the *Get the Site Right* education and compliance campaign and opportunities for training. The subcommittee also focused on issues around chemical bunding and other spill containment on industrial sites and identified key industrial areas across the catchment to target. NSW EPA also held an online presentation on chemical bunding for member councils.

Education and Biodiversity Subcommittee: met once at the December 2019 Officer Group meeting in lieu of a dedicated meeting. Results from the internal ecological health survey and priorities were shared and discussed at this meeting. It was also decided to merge the two subcommittees.

Stormwater Subcommittee: managed jointly by the Sydney Water Delivery Engine and City of Parramatta met seven times over the year to develop and implement their stormwater workplan. The priorities for the group are centred around improving the capacity of councils to build and manage green infrastructure that will treat stormwater before it enters our river and impacts swim sites. The Delivery Engine is working on identifying sustainable funding options for delivering more stormwater treatment infrastructure, as well as prioritising where infrastructure is required in the catchment.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Get the Site Right: Regulatory staff from all catchment councils were invited to attend training in erosion and sediment control. There were twenty five places available across all partner groups and six PRCG member councils were funded to attend.



Murama Healing Space and PRCG teams

COLLABORATING ACROSS CATCHMENTS

Coastal Zone Management Plan: An annual review of actions implemented was completed and reported to the Coastal and Estuary division of DPIE.

Greater Sydney Harbour Coastal Management Program: The PRCG is represented on the Greater Sydney Harbour Coastal Management Program Steering Committee and attended two partners group workshops.

The PRCG Chair, Vice Chair, and Coordinator met with DPIE to discuss potential alignment of the Coastal Management Program with the Masterplan.

The PRCG has also been invited onto the Greater Sydney Harbour Coastal CMP project team which has representatives from NSW Coastal Council, Sydney Coastal Council Group, and DPIE.

Get the Site Right: The Cooks River Alliance, Georges Riverkeeper, Sydney Coastal Councils and Lake Macquarie Council met twice and continue to implement the *Get the Site Right* campaign twice a year.

FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS

Aboriginal culture: the PRCG Coordinator was invited to become a member of the Murama Cultural Centre Advisory Council, an official working group that will provide strategic advice and oversight for Murama initiatives. Murama Healing Space has created five totems for the Gadigal Walk that represent each of the Parramatta River ecological health mascots.

The PRCG was also asked to participate in a video that was produced for National Reconciliation Week and the Murama website.

Aboriginal Advisory Committees: The PRCG Coordinator contacted all member councils with Aboriginal Advisory Committees to offer a presentation on the Parramatta River Masterplan and identify opportunities for collaboration. This was followed by a presentation to the City of Parramatta Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee.

The Government Architect NSW: presented to the Full Group meeting on their *Connecting with Country* program.

Western Sydney University: One Million Turtles is partnering with Dr Ricky Spencer in a Federal Bridging Grant to facilitate a breeding program in conjunction with PLC Sydney. Dr Spencer provided a briefing to the Full Group meeting on 5 December 2019. Oatlands Golf Club were unsuccessful for a second year on their application for a Federal Grant for an offline wetland at the course to support turtle breeding but have committed to applying again in 2020.

University of NSW: UNSW student Simon Lloyd presented a report on 'Microbial hazards in urban stormwater and their removal through Water Sensitive Urban Design'.



INDUSTRY AWARDS



2019 Stormwater NSW Awards

The PRCG was thrilled to win the 2019 Stormwater NSW Award for our Masterplan. The award is a worthy acknowledgement of the planning, collaboration and hard work that went into its development. Congratulations go to all our member councils, government agencies and community groups that contributed.



PRCG and Sydney Water Delivery Engine teams

TfNSW Maritime Environmental Services: joined the Stormwater Subcommittee where they have shared litter collection data and are working to identify other opportunities for litter collection and removal from the Parramatta River.

DPIE: The PRCG met with DPIE to present the Masterplan and discuss opportunities for Water Sensitive Urban Design and Integrated Water Management leadership.

Western Sydney University: the PRCG met with WSU staff to discuss options for future research projects.

Bar-tailed Godwit Twin Schools Program: the Riverkeeper liaised with academics from Western Sydney University and BirdLife Australia to scope whether a twin schools program could connect schools around Sydney with Chinese schools along the migratory corridor of the Bar-tailed Godwit.



Hannah Chalmers presents her video 'Down the Drain' to City of Canada Bay's Mayor Tsirekas

COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING

Parramatta River Masterplan: The Masterplan Dashboard was launched on the *Our Living River* website and provides a transparent and visual platform for monitoring and reporting on the progress against all steps of the Masterplan.

PRCG and Sydney Water Delivery Engine teams: met monthly to plan and coordinate implementation of the Masterplan.

ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES

Due to COVID-19, many community events and campaigns scheduled for the first half of 2020 were unable to proceed as planned. However, the PRCG continued to engage with our various community groups through online campaigns, meetings and workshops.



River Aware pilot launch

River Aware: following a pilot launch of the campaign in July 2019, a full launch was conducted online in May 2020. The community was also encouraged to take the 'River Aware pledge' to encourage behavioural change.

One Million Turtles: PLC Sydney has been awarded a grant to purchase a turtle breeding pod, which will support Dr Ricky Spencer from Western Sydney University's grant applications expected to be announced in October 2020. If successful, the grant will include the development of design guidelines for turtle-friendly wetlands.

Rhodes Community Committee: The PRCG Riverkeeper attended the Rhodes Community Committee meeting on Wednesday, 28 November 2019 to present on the Masterplan mission and PRCG activities.

Hannah Chalmers: The PRCG organised an online meeting between our Riverkeeper Ambassador, 10-year-old PLC Sydney student Hannah Chalmers, and Mayor of Canada Bay, Angelo Tsirekas, to present Hannah's film, *Down the Drain*.

Keep Australia Beautiful: The PRCG nominated Hannah Chalmers for a Keep Australia Beautiful 'Young Legends Award' for her work as a Riverkeeper Ambassador and producing a video highlighting the Parramatta River and the importance of protecting water quality.



Kissing Point Park

ADVOCACY

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

During 2019-2020, the PRCG made submissions on the planning of future policies impacting the environment and waterways, and advocated for funding to implement the Parramatta River Masterplan.

TECHNICAL SUBMISSIONS

- Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), in response to the Infrastructure Contributions Review. This submission was endorsed by the PRCG Full Group.
- Greater Metropolitan Water Sharing – preparing a joint submission with Sydney Coastal Councils Group.
- DPIE EPA Cleaning Up Our Act: Redirecting the Future of Plastic in NSW.
- DPIE Major Projects on Western Harbour Tunnel and Warringah Freeway upgrade.

ADVOCATING FOR FUNDING

- Letter of support provided to City of Parramatta's Biodiversity team for a funding application to the NSW Environmental Trust grant to improve habitat and provide nests boxes for microbats, birds and gliders along the foreshore of Parramatta River.
- The PRCG Chair, Vice Chair and PRCG Coordinator met with ANZ bank Managing Director, Loans and Specialised Finance, regarding funding and sponsorship opportunities.
- Coordinator met with Transport for NSW to present on the Masterplan steps and invite onto the PRCG as a financial member.
- Coordinator met with Sydney Olympic Park Authority to present on the Masterplan steps and invite them onto the PRCG as a financial member.

OTHER NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

- The Parramatta River Masterplan was sent to all Partner Council General Managers.
- PRCG provided a letter of support for the Ryde Riverwalk, sent to City of Ryde Mayor and General Manager.
- City of Ryde endorsed the Parramatta River Masterplan and prioritised the activation of Putney Park swim site.
- Coordinator presented to Hunter's Hill Council leadership team on the Parramatta River Masterplan, which was then endorsed at the March 2020 Council meeting.
- Coordinator presented to City of Canada Bay leadership team on the PRCG and Parramatta River Masterplan.
- Presentation to Inner West Council Manager Urban Ecology on the PRCG structure and Masterplan.
- Presentation to the City of Canada Bay Environmental Advisory Committee.

Copies of the Masterplan were sent to:

- The Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Shelley Hancock MP.
- Shadow Minister for Environment & Heritage, Ms Kate Washington MP.
- Government Architect NSW with letter of thanks for the *Connecting with Country* presentation to the Full Group meeting held September 2019.
- Letter of thanks to outgoing Riverkeeper, Joanne Taranto, for her commitment and enthusiasm during her 18 months with the PRCG and her volunteer role prior to employment.



TEN STEPS TO A LIVING RIVER

Established in February 2019, the Masterplan Delivery Engine is a cross-agency group coordinated by Sydney Water that drives delivery of the Masterplan. The Delivery Engine team meets regularly with the PRCG team to plan and report on the progress of the Masterplan implementation.

The key Masterplan delivery highlights for 2019-20 are summarised below:

1. GET SWIMMING



A review of the City of Parramatta's user preference survey was undertaken to determine applicability at future swimming sites. A revised user preference survey will be used for new swim sites as they open.

Dawn Fraser Baths was closed in late 2019 to undergo significant restorations and improvements, including raising the baths' central pavilion and boardwalk and the construction of new recycled timber pavilions, kiosk and lighting towers. The Baths will reopen to the public in summer 2020.

2. KEEP WATCH



Sydney Water has completed a year's worth of microbial water quality monitoring for new swimming sites at Bayview Park, Mcllwaine Park and Putney Park. A pictorial conceptual

model was also developed to illustrate the current understanding of contaminants and exposure pathways in the Parramatta River.

Key decision makers at NSW Health, DPIE and members of the Swim Site Activation Technical Working Group endorsed a Human Health Risk Assessment Framework to support the chemical assessment at priority swim sites.



Artist's impression of Putney Park site activation

Sydney Water and the PRCG collaborated on the upgrade of the interactive map on the *Our Living River* website. Once completed, the map will include water quality monitoring data at each of the priority swimming sites and provide the community with weather information and advice on whether a site is suitable for swimming.

Beachwatch continues 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 SWIM SPOTS



The City of Ryde and City of Canada Bay have progressed design and construction plans for the activation of their swimming sites at Bayview Park, Mcllwaine Park and Putney

Park. City of Canada Bay held community consultation for Mcllwaine Park and has progressed to draft construction plans, while Bayview Park consultation was rescheduled due to COVID-19, and is planned to move online. All sites are on track to open during 2021.

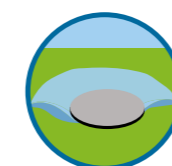
5. REDUCE STORMWATER RUNOFF



The Stormwater Subcommittee continues to meet on a regular basis and has developed a detailed work program. The priorities of the group centre around improving the

capacity of councils to build and manage green infrastructure that will treat stormwater before it enters our river and impacts swim sites. The Delivery Engine is working on pathways to fund more stormwater treatment infrastructure, as well as prioritising where infrastructure is required in the catchment.

6. IMPROVE OVERFLOWS



Sydney Water is working closely with the EPA to prioritise wet weather overflow abatement works in the Parramatta River catchment. During 2019-20, works were

focused on repairs to the wastewater network to prevent stormwater directly entering through the emergency relief structures and manholes in the Upper Parramatta River catchment with similar works also being planned for Mid Parramatta River catchment. Future works will also involve repairs to pipes to prevent water ingress and rectifying illegal connections on private properties.



4. STANDARDISE THE STANDARDS



A comprehensive review of the strategic and statutory planning frameworks that contribute to delivering a swimmable Parramatta River

was undertaken in consultation with councils and NSW government agencies throughout 2019-20.

Following the release of an earlier Discussion and Options Paper which was circulated for comment, a draft Recommendations Paper has now been prepared and is expected to be finalised by the end of 2020.

The paper is the result of considerable work by specialist consultancy Civille and the Sydney Water Delivery Engine team to deliver a whole of catchment land use planning policy and statutory planning mechanisms.

Some of the key recommendations from the paper include:

- The development of a 'blue-green index' tool to facilitate easy assessment of new developments to meet water quality, waterway and riparian land objectives.
- The development of a blue-green riparian mapping system to be applied across the catchment that sets objectives for waterway management.
- Influencing and advocating for reform of state government level planning policies including BASIX, infrastructure assessments and State Environmental Planning Policies.
- Strengthening funding of blue-green infrastructure.

7. INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY



The PRCG continues to engage with the community through the *Get the Site Right* education and compliance campaign. A Blitz Day was held in October 2019, and a smaller, month-long campaign was run in June 2020 supported by a social media campaign that targeted home builders and renovators during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The River Aware residential stormwater awareness campaign was launched through social media platforms in May, and was well-received reaching more than 4,000 people. Interest from other Sydney catchment groups has resulted in a joint River Aware campaign being planned for March 2021.



Lake Parramatta Bushcare

PRCG supports Riverkeeper Ambassadors to hold events that encourage the community to engage with the river and contribute to improving its health through cycling tours and litter clean-up activities. In 2021 the PRCG plans to hold Riverkeeper Ambassador training to grow our network.

8. BRING IN NATURE



An ecological survey was conducted with council partners to help prioritise activities under this Masterplan step.

Work has now commenced on developing a citizen science app specifically for the Parramatta area with the help of a Macquarie University Masters student, in partnership with DPIE Environmental Science unit. The app will eventually be expanded for use across the whole catchment.

The PRCG attended National Tree Day events held by our partner councils.



Macquarie University Masters students' presentations

9. REPORT BACK REGULARLY



Monitoring and reporting is now recorded on the Masterplan Dashboard, located on the *Our Living River* website. The Dashboard is updated quarterly and provides all

stakeholders with a summary on the status of each Masterplan step.

10. CREATE CLEAR LEADERSHIP



A new Parramatta River Catchment Coordinator was appointed in August 2019. The PRCG and Sydney Water continue to work together with our stakeholders to implement the

Masterplan. Two tours of the Parramatta River were organised for senior executives from the Sydney Water Board, DPIE, Transport for NSW, Department of Health, and Council General Managers to highlight the progress being made on the activation of new swim sites along the river.

The PRCG collaborated with the Murama Healing Space to plan projects, attend events and participate in a video for National Reconciliation Week.



Opening of the Murama Healing Space Dance Ground



Get the Site Right

Education and regular inspections continue to be key drivers of the *Get the Site Right* campaign.

In the October 2019 Blitz Day, more than 400 building and construction sites were inspected by 19 councils and NSW Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). Sixty-two per cent of sites were compliant and the number of 'repeat offenders' – those developers with multiple sites that were non-compliant – decreased by almost 30 per cent from the May 2019 results. A total of \$76,330 in fines were issued to non-compliant sites, which is \$9,000 more than the total issued from the one-day blitz in May.

The June 2020 campaign targeted home renovation and DIY projects during the COVID-19 isolation period as well as the expected increase in building projects due to the introduction of government stimulus packages for builders and renovators.

The EPA and 14 councils inspected more than 600 sites across Sydney and the Hunter Coast, where 73 per cent were found to be compliant – a 10 per cent improvement on the previous campaign. A total of \$189,484 in fines were issued to non-compliant sites.

A second Blitz Day is planned for October 2020 during *Riverfest* to maintain the level of awareness and compliance.

During 2019–20 the EPA increased its support for the campaign by assigning additional officers to accompany council staff on blitz day site inspections and offer guidance on identifying poor erosion and sediment controls.

IECA Council Compliance Workshop

In July 2019 the PRCG participated in the International Erosion Control Association Australasia's (IECA) Council Compliance Workshop. Sixty participants from nine government organisations took part in the workshop, including several of our member councils.

The presentations covered different aspects of erosion and sediment control. Nadia Young from the PRCG presented on *Get the Site Right* as an example of a successful collaborative community engagement campaign. Council staff commented on how useful the day was and are keen to take part in future workshops.



KEY RESULTS

- ✓ 1,046 sites inspected
- ✓ 10% improvement in compliance
- ✓ 27% reduction in 'repeat offenders'
- ✓ \$265,814 in fines issued
- ✓ 2 x PRCG Regulatory Subcommittee planning and review meetings
- ✓ 2 x cross-catchment groups planning and review meetings
- ✓ PRCG presentation at IECA Council Compliance Workshop



Riverfest 2019 launch at the Masters Swimming NSW Open Water Swim, Lake Parramatta



Dr Geoffrey Lee and Cr Bob Dwyer open Riverfest



City of Canada Bay's Boomerang Bags workshop

Riverfest 2019

The Parramatta River Catchment Group's annual, premier community event *Riverfest* once again proved to be a worthy celebration of the river and surrounding catchment. This year's festival was held over 10 days from 17-27 October with over 1,300 people taking part in more than 25 events across six local government areas.

Riverfest was launched at the Masters Swimming NSW Open Water Swim at Lake Parramatta. More than 30 people braved the brisk conditions for the 1km and 2km course, which was won by Jenny Banks

and Peter Thiel, respectively. The Hon. Dr Geoffrey Lee, Member for Parramatta, officially opened the event, and City of Parramatta Lord Mayor, Cr Bob Dwyer, and PRCG Chair, Cr Mark Drury, both blew the whistle for the start of each race.

Other Riverfest highlights included the Resilient Blacktown Community Picnic Day, City of Ryde's kayaking tour of the Parramatta River and City of Canada Bay's Spring Clean for the Shorebirds at Rodd Point. There were also several river and creek clean-ups, a Boomerang Bag making workshop, birdlife information session and habitat planting, and even a chance to try dragon boating!

Thank you to all the councils, government agencies, community groups, and volunteers who organised or supported the events.

Events such as *Riverfest* continue to play a key role in delivering Step 7 of the Masterplan 'Involve the Community' by raising awareness of the issues affecting waterway health and promoting the many ways the community can contribute towards its preservation.



KEY RESULTS

- ✓ 25+ events
- ✓ 6 LGAs involved
- ✓ 1300+ people participated
- ✓ 10,000+ online reach



ParraParents foreshore clean-up at Rydalmere



DSA – Dragon Sports Association's Community Open Day



City of Canada Bay's Spring Clean for the Shorebirds



Resilient Blacktown Community Picnic Day



Clean Up Australia Day, Lake Parramatta

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

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

During 2019-2020 the PRCG engaged with our diverse audiences and communities through a wide range of projects and events:

River Aware

River Aware is a residential education program that raises awareness of residential source pollution and encourages behavioural change. A soft launch of the campaign was held in July 2019, supported by a survey to ascertain the community's understanding about the difference between stormwater and wastewater and what litter prevention activities they currently undertake.

A full launch of the campaign was planned to coincide with the Concord Carnival in March 2020; however, due to COVID-19 this event was cancelled and an online campaign was run instead. The community was also encouraged to take the 'River Aware Pledge' and adopt five simple behavioural habits to reduce pollutants from entering our waterways.

2019 Stormwater NSW Conference

PRCG staff Jo Taranto and Nadia Young attended the 2019 Stormwater NSW Conference in Coffs Harbour. They presented on the *River Aware* and *Get the Site Right* campaigns as examples of how to engage the

community to help reduce stormwater and source pollution, and learnt more about the opportunities and challenges of future sustainable stormwater practices.

Mcllwaine Park Riverside Community Day

We were delighted to join Sydney Water at City of Canada Bay's Riverside Community Day to promote their plans to upgrade the foreshore at Mcllwaine Park and improve access to Brays Bay. The upgrade will include a new accessible pathway along the foreshore, naturalised riverbank from the land into the water and a launch facility for water activities.

We also had the opportunity to talk to community members about other aspects of the Masterplan, including the swim sites being planned at Bayview Park and Putney Park and the development of Sydney Water's Riverwatch Monitoring Program.

2020 Clean Up Australia Day

The PRCG took part in several Clean Up Australia Day events across the catchment, including Cumberland City Council and the Lions Club event at Lake Parramatta. At the City of Canada Bay event at Rodd Point, we were on hand to watch Federal Minister for the Environment, Sussan Ley's announcement of the government's \$300,000 contribution over the next

few years to the Clean Up Australia initiative, ahead of the first National Plastics Summit that was held at Parliament House the following week. Roads and Maritime Services also demonstrated their floating litter collection vessel and the significant amount of rubbish that had been collected from the Parramatta River that morning.

OTHER EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The PRCG also took part in several other community events, including:

- Moocooboola Festival – 4 Aug. 2019
- Cherry Blossom Festival Garden Day – 20 Aug. 2019
- Footprints EcoFestival – 25 Aug. 2019
- International Erosion Control Association Council Compliance Workshop – 19 Sept. 2019
- Sydney Water Tank Stream Tour – 7 Nov. 2019
- Opening of the Murama Dance Space at SOPA's Youth Eco Summit – 13 Nov. 2019
- Sydney Water Tours of Parramatta River swim sites – 31 Jan. and 6 Feb. 2020
- Lake Parramatta Bushcare Kayaking – 24 Feb. 2020
- Clean Up Australia Day – 1 Mar. 2020
- Australian Radio Network live broadcast at Newington Armory – 14 Mar. 2020



2019 Cherry Blossom Festival



Mcllwaine Park Riverside Community Day



IECA Aust. Council Compliance Workshop



2019 Stormwater NSW Conference



KEY RESULTS

- 25+ community events
- 11 media items
- 1900+ followers across Our Living River social media platforms; 25+ posts/tweets per month; 4.3% average engagement rate per post.
- 960+ active e-newsletter subscribers
- Our Living River website: 34,800+ page views and 16,340+ sessions by 12,000+ users.
- 115 Riverkeepers
- 4 Riverkeeper Ambassadors
- 6 Affiliate Organisations
- 87 Riverkeeper Network Facebook members



Riverkeeper Program

The Riverkeeper program was first launched in 2016 with funding from the Greater Sydney Local Land Services and Landcare NSW Local Landcare Coordinator Initiative.

Key projects and events this year included:

Riverkeeper Network

The Parramatta River Riverkeeper Network facebook group continued to grow this year and was a useful way for members to keep in contact with each other during the COVID-19 restrictions. It provides a great source of information about citizen science projects, such as the Turtle Sat App and wildlife sightings, technical and practical ideas to help the river and surrounding environment, including seabins and floating wetlands, awareness of Aboriginal custodianship of the river such as the *Healing through Belonging* exhibition at Murama Healing Space, and promotion of other relevant events.

Active members Kellie Darley (Parramatta Riverkeeper Litter Clean Ups), Julz Strykowski (Plastic Pluckers), Rashi Srivastava and Philip Pogson organised litter removal events at various locations in the catchment, including: Duck River, Kissing Point, Toongabbie Creek and Rydalmere Wharf.

Ecological Health Survey

The Riverkeeper conducted an online survey with our member organisations to help understand current actions affecting the habitat and management of our key iconic species and catchment ecological

health. This will substantially inform the Landcare Local Land Services Priority planning process and the development of our three-year PRCG strategic work plan.

1 Million Turtles

Work on this exciting project continues to progress with girls' school PLC Sydney being awarded a grant to purchase a 'turtle breeding pod'. The pod is a modified self-contained shipping container that will allow up to 1,000 eggs to be incubated each year. Viewing windows are installed to allow students to watch eggs and turtles as they hatch.

Western Sydney University researcher and 1 Million Turtles founder, Dr Ricky Spencer, is hoping to secure a grant which, if successful, will include the development of design guidelines for turtle-friendly wetlands. Due to COVID-19 restrictions during 2020, it is hoped that breeding can start in 2021.

The Riverkeeper represented the PRCG at the following events:

- Powerful Owls Research Summit – 20 Jul. 2019
- 2020 Vision Growing Together Tour – 8 Aug. 2019
- Catholic Earthcare Youth Eco Summit – 30 Aug. 2019
- Seaside Scavenge at Barry Wilde Bridge, City of Parramatta – 2 Nov. 2019
- Rhodes Community Committee meeting on Wednesday – 28 Nov. 2019
- North Rocks & Murray Farm Scouts – 18 Feb. 2020

Riverkeeper Ambassadors

Our three current Riverkeeper Ambassadors are very active supporters of our mission to make the Parramatta River swimmable again and work tirelessly to educate and inspire people through their own community initiatives.

Charlene Bordley – Addventagous

Addventagous is a social enterprise that provides affordable and accessible cycling programs and services for all members of the community.

During the year Charlene ran more than 50 free 'Our Living River' cycling tours along the Parramatta River to educate the community about the fish weirs and fauna and flora of the catchment, and how the community can help make the Parramatta River swimmable.



Charlene Bordley

Kellie Darley – ParraParents

Kellie is a passionate advocate for environmental issues in the Parramatta River catchment and works on ways to reduce litter and motivate the community to make a difference. Her promotion of parks, playgrounds and bushwalking opportunities were especially welcomed by the community during COVID-19 lockdowns where knowledge of safe and interesting places for families to play was such a vital contribution.

In 2019-20, the PRCG offered support by attending the monthly family-friendly foreshore clean-ups organised by Kellie and providing River Aware and *Our Living River* collateral to display at the events. These events were redesigned to be COVID-safe and suitable for children to participate under the supervision of their parents.



Kellie Darley

Hannah Chalmers

Nine-year-old PLC Sydney student, Hannah Chalmers, was invited to join the Riverkeeper Network as our youngest Ambassador. Hannah came to our attention when she won equal first place in the 2018 Young Scientist Awards for her *Green Elephant* app that reminds people to take their reusable bags with them when they go shopping.

In 2019 Hannah was supported by staff from the PRCG, Sydney Water and City of Canada Bay to create her video, *Down the Drain*, which looks at the impact of litter that ends up in our waterways and the benefits of naturalising stormwater channels.

The PRCG has nominated Hannah for the 2020 Young Legends Environment Award category of the Keep Australia Beautiful NSW Sustainable Cities Awards, which will be announced in late 2020.



Hannah Chalmers and the PRCG team



Charlene Bordley, Kellie Darley and Nadia Young

MONITORING AND REPORTING

PRCG FINANCIAL REPORT (2019-20)

INCOME	\$
Carry over – Member funds transferred from City of Parramatta	117,353
Annual membership fees	290,410
2019-20 Grant Funds (Local Landcare Coordinator)	53,915
Carry over – Community Landcare Grant (River Aware)	14,570
Community Landcare mini grant (Citizen Science App)	3,500
Total income	\$479,748
EXPENSES	\$
Salaries and on-costs (Coordinator 1.0 FTE & Comms 0.6 FTE)	210,908
Salaries and on-costs (Riverkeeper 0.6 FTE)	50,108
Materials (printing, signage)	23,973
Contracts (consultancies, professional services)	–
River Aware grant expenditure	9,449
Total expenses	\$294,438
NET OPERATING RESULT	\$185,310

FUNDING

The PRCG is currently managing the following funding in addition to membership fees:

- A Local Landcare Services grant for \$215,660 from the NSW Landcare Program – Local Coordinator Funding Grant, which provides part funding for the Riverkeeper position until 30 June 2023.
- A Local Landcare Services mini-grant for \$3,500 for the development of a Citizen Science app
- The remaining River Aware program grant for \$14,700 to finalise and print the education collateral for distribution to members.

PRCG members: Endorsed the change from 0.6 FTE to 0.8 FTE of the Riverkeeper position and the increase in expenditure of \$17,984 per year that the change would incur. The rise in cost can be covered by the current budget.

The PRCG regularly reports 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 (Nov. 2017-)

VICE CHAIR

Cr Penny Pedersen – City of Ryde (Nov. 2017-)

COUNCILLORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

- Blacktown City Council: Cr Susai Benjamin, Cr Kathie Collins
- 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 Prociv
- City of Ryde: Cr Penny Pedersen, Cr Roy Magio
- Cumberland Council: Cr Glenn Elmore, Cr Ross Grove
- Hunters Hill Council: Cr Ross Williams
- Inner West Council: Cr Mark Drury, Cr Marghanita Da Cruz

PARRAMATTA RIVER MASTERPLAN REFERENCE GROUP

- Roch Cheroux – Managing Director, Sydney Water
- Cr Mark Drury – Chair, Parramatta River Catchment Group
- Cr Penny Pedersen – Vice Chair, Parramatta River Catchment Group
- Phillip Birtles – PRCG Executive Committee Member & 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
- Kristin Gabriel – A/Chief Resilience Officer, Sydney, 100 Resilient Cities Program
- Giselle Howard – Director Regulatory Operations, NSW Environment Protection Authority
- Petrina Nelson – PRCG Executive Committee Member & Open Space Planning Coordinator – City of Canada Bay
- Paul Plowman – General Manager, Liveable City Solutions, Sydney Water
- Rod Simpson – Environment Commissioner, Greater Sydney Commission
- Jazmin Van Veen, Assoc. Director – Greater Parramatta to Olympic Peninsula, Department of Planning, Industry & Environment

STAFF REPRESENTATIVES OF MEMBER AGENCIES

- (Includes staff participating in the PRCG Full Group, subcommittees and technical groups)
- Blacktown City Council: Tahina Ahmed, Craig Bush, Libby Cameron, Clarissa Davis, Kristy Good, Yael Lang, Amanda Or
 - Burwood Council: Pablo Barreto, Tet Lim, Andrew McClure, Oliver Ellis, Tai Trinh
 - City of Canada Bay: Ju’eta Amir, Renae Barnes, Belinda Koytz, Petrina Nelson, Jade Pemberton, Robi Rigo
 - City of Canterbury Bankstown: Sahiza Ali, Nasi Laveta, David Lowery, Joanne McDonnell, Dean Omera, Asad Suman
 - City of Parramatta: Eric Brandao, Paul Hackney, Glenn Haskins, Lisa Kollaras, Paul Lyth, Helen Papathanasiou, Stuart Pike, Bernadette Riad, Steven Ross, James Smallson
 - City of Ryde: Katie Helm, Kylie McMahon, Tom Ramsay
 - Cumberland Council: Frances Hamilton, Kristian Kovac, Rita Milostnik, Tim Nugyen, Stuart Nunn
 - Department of Planning and Environment: Sally Anderson, Santina Camroux, Michael Frankcombe, Joannathan Fenger, Alfarid Hussain, Pheobie Laing
 - NSW Environment Protection Authority: James Boyle, Lisa Cranbrook, James Goodwin, Jarrod Grimson, Giselle Howard, Kieran Henry, Jacqueline Ingham, Lisa Power, Benn Treharne
 - Hunters Hill Council: Cate Alder, Jacqui Vollmer
 - Inner West Council: Jean Brennan, Gwilym Griffiths, Bang Le, Deborah Lennis, Sarah Kamarudin
 - Sydney Water: Philip Adams, Charles Agnew, Phillip Birtles, Daniel Bradley, Amanda Chimkievitch, Rodd Kerr, Alex Michie, Leanne Niblock, Nerida Taylor

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS AND KEY CONTRIBUTORS

- Cooks River Alliance: Sue Burton
- Department of Primary Industries: Carla Ganassin, Josi Hollywood
- Georges Riverkeeper: Beth Salt
- Greater Sydney Local Land Services: Madeleine Florin
- Greater Sydney Coastal Management Program Chair: Prof Emer Bruce Thom
- Greater Sydney Landcare Network: Jeff Cottrell
- Government Architects Office: Michael Holt
- 100 Resilient Cities Program: Beck Dawson, Kristen Gabriel
- Office of Environment and Heritage: Daylan Cameron, Meredith Campey, Peter Freewater
- Parramatta Park and Western Sydney Parklands Trusts: David Kirkland

- Transport for NSW: Lara Kirchner
- Maritime Services: Wayne Cartner, Andrew Mogg
- Sydney Coastal Councils Group: Sarah Joyce
- Sydney Olympic Park Authority: Kerry Darcovich, Tina Hsu, Jenny O’Meara, Swapan Paul
- Western Sydney University: Dr Ricky Spencer

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Charlene Bordley – Addventagaeous
- Frank Breen – Ryde Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society
- Kellie Darley – ParraParents
- Zoe Kapetangiannis – City of Canada Bay Sustainable City Committee
- Antony Lewis – Blacktown and District Environment Group Inc.

OUR LIVING RIVER AMBASSADORS

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

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2017-2018

- Phillip Birtles – Sydney Water
- Jean Brennan & Sarah Kamarudin – Inner West
- Paul Hackney – City of Parramatta
- Kylie McMahon – City of Ryde
- Petrina Nelson – City of Canada Bay

SYDNEY WATER DELIVERY ENGINE

- Leanne Niblock – Delivery Engine Manager (2019)
- Nerida Taylor – Acting Delivery Engine Manager (2020-)
- Alex Michie – Riverwatch Coordinator (2019-2020)
- Daniel Bradley – Riverwatch Coordinator (2020-)
- Phillip Adams – Strategic Stormwater Planner (2020-)

PRCG STAFF

- Nell Graham, PRCG Coordinator (2019-)
- Joanne Taranto, PRCG Riverkeeper (2018-2020)
- Nadia Young, PRCG Communications Officer



OUR THANKS

Thank you to all of our members and supporters for their dedicated efforts over the past year to make the Parramatta River swimmable again by 2025.

FINANCIAL MEMBERS 2019-2020



ASSOCIATE MEMBERS AND OTHER KEY CONTRIBUTORS



Birdlife Southern NSW's Judy Harrington teaches a group of children about the Bar-tailed Godwits at the City of Canada Bay's Spring Clean for the Shorebirds.



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