



LET'S MAKE OUR RIVER
SWIMMABLE AGAIN BY
2025



MEDIA RELEASE
Under embargo until 15 April 2021

Building industry needs to play its part in protecting Sydney's natural beauty

Builders and home renovators are being urged to stop run-off from their building sites polluting waterways and green spaces that Sydneysiders increasingly rely on for recreation and enjoyment.

A survey conducted by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) in 2020¹ showed that 45 per cent of respondents spent more time in public spaces since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey also found that 71 per cent of respondents appreciated local parks more.

The NSW Government's plan to fund a \$16 million COVID-19 stimulus program to help deliver more quality green public space on Crown land across Greater Sydney provides a further incentive to prevent sediment run-off from impacting our natural spaces.

To advise builders and renovators on best practice erosion and sediment controls, local councils, the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and DPIE will be conducting a month-long *Get the Site Right* education and compliance campaign during May. A follow-up one-day inspection blitz of building sites across Sydney and the Hunter Coast will be held on Thursday, 20 May 2021.

Sediment run-off usually contains common building materials such as cement, sand and soil. These materials can contaminate water and cause algal blooms that harm marine plants and animals. They can also build up in marine species, such as mussels, and have a dangerous impact on the food chain.

Sediment in the water can affect swimming and other recreational activities by causing unpleasant odours and making the water cloudy.

NSW EPA Executive Director Regulatory Operations Steve Beaman said confusion still exists about where sediment run-off goes when it enters the stormwater system.

"Stormwater is rainwater that collects pollutants, including sediment from building sites, as it runs across different surfaces and flows through the stormwater collection network of gutters, pipes and stormwater drains and then directly out to local waterways, untreated," Mr Beaman said.

"It is different from wastewater which is water that goes down sinks, toilets and drains and is collected in the sewerage system and taken to a wastewater treatment plant.

"That is why it is so important that builders and renovators prevent sediment run-off from leaving their sites to protect local waterways and the surrounding environment."



LET'S MAKE OUR RIVER
SWIMMABLE AGAIN BY
2025



Parramatta River Catchment Group Chair Councillor Mark Drury said reducing run-off and improving stormwater infrastructure and planning are two key objectives of the *Parramatta River Masterplan*.

“Sediment run-off can have a significant impact on our enjoyment of swim sites, foreshore parks and other green spaces,” Cr Drury said.

“Repairing and maintaining stormwater infrastructure due to blockages from run-off can also be very costly for councils and Sydney Water so we’re working closely with them and other government agencies to reduce sediment run-off and other source pollution.”

Now in its sixth year, *Get the Site Right* is a joint program between the Cooks River Alliance, DPIE, Georges Riverkeeper, the EPA, Parramatta River Catchment Group, Sydney Coastal Councils Group, local Sydney councils and Lake Macquarie Council.

Members of the public are encouraged to report pollution incidents, including poor sediment control, to their local council or the EPA’s 24/7 Environment Line on 131 555.

¹ <https://www.greater.sydney/greater-use-of-public-open-and-shared-space>

– ENDS –

Note to Editors:

Images available on request.

Parramatta River Catchment Group media enquiries:

Nadia Young, PRCG Communications Officer
Phone: 9806 8241 / 0415 231 339
Email: nadia.young@ourlivingriver.com.au

EPA media enquiries:

Lisa Power Senior Public Affairs Officer, Public Affairs and Communications
Email: Lisa.Power@epa.nsw.gov.au
Phone: (02) 8275 1567 / 0408 028 756
24-hour Media Line: 9995 6415