

BUILDERS URGED TO 'GET THE SITE RIGHT' TO AVOID WASTE AND PROTECT OUR WATERWAYS

Builders and developers are being urged to safeguard their construction materials from high wind and other strong weather events to prevent pollution of local waterways as this year's Get the Site Right campaign kicks off on Wednesday 1 May.

Now in its eighth year, Get the Site Right is a joint taskforce between the Cooks River Alliance, Georges Riverkeeper, NSW Dept of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI), NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), Parramatta River Catchment Group, Sydney Coastal Councils Group, WaterNSW, and councils across NSW.

As part of the month-long campaign, officers from the NSW EPA, DPHI, and more than 20 councils will participate in inspections for a one-day compliance blitz on **Thursday 16 May**.

The 2024 campaign's focus is on pollution prevention through securing construction materials.

2023's Get the Site Right blitz saw a 6% increase in compliance between the May and October campaigns and the taskforce is aiming for even higher levels of compliance this year.

NSW EPA Director Operations Adam Gilligan said that the loss of building materials such as roof sheeting or insulation padding is not only costly to the construction industry but can also have significant impacts on the environment.

"Construction materials washed or blown from construction sites can block stormwater drains, as well as impact the health of our waterways and marine life," Mr Gilligan said.

"Builders and developers have a duty to ensure their sites have the proper controls in place to prevent pollution incidents.

"Environmental criminals will also now have a higher price to pay, thanks to recently passed stronger penalties, with on-the-spot fines for water pollution starting at \$30,000 for companies.

"These new fines are even more reason for builders and developers to prevent pollution and do the right thing."

Parramatta River Catchment Group (PRCG) Chair Councillor Mark Drury said that builders and home renovators have an important role to play in protecting our waterways for recreational use.

"This year the PRCG celebrates the 10th anniversary of the Our Living River mission to make the Parramatta River swimmable this year, and eagerly awaits the opening of two more swim sites on the river at Gladesville and Putney. Working with local and state government agencies and the community to reduce stormwater pollution remains a vital part of our plan to improve water quality in the river," Cr Drury said.

Failing to put these protections in place can attract on-the-spot fines for individuals of \$15,000 for the first offence and \$22,500 for a second offence, and for companies \$30,000 for the first offence and \$45,000 for a second offence if water pollution occurs under the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*.

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.

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