

Waterway health

How we help manage waterways

Sydney's iconic waterways are integral to our way of life. Waterways include creeks, rivers, harbours, lakes, wetlands, lagoons, estuaries and oceans.



Parramatta River



Sydney Harbour



Hawkesbury River

Benefit of healthy waterways

Sydney has some of the most beautiful waterways in the world where we can enjoy the benefits of clean, healthy water.

Our waterways:

- sustain life and improve liveability
- deliver water for drinking, irrigation, industry and recreation
- provide habitat for native plants and animals
- drain flood waters or 'stormwater' out to sea
- benefit our economy with tourism
- enable biological processes that support the air, soil and water we need to live
- connect us with nature.

Who looks after waterways?

In Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the Illawarra, Sydney Water shares ownership and management of waterways with private land owners, local councils, and other state government agencies.

How do we manage waterways?

Waterways we own and manage are mainly in Sydney's CBD, inner west, and northwest. We work with other agencies to manage threats to waterway health and help shape the lifestyle of greater Sydney.

All elements of water management support waterway health and benefit the economy. This includes managing floods, conserving water, and treating and recycling wastewater.

Threats to our waterways

With more urbanisation and population growth, the pressure on waterways increases. Some main impacts on waterways are:

- pollution from stormwater or flood waters
- wastewater overflows
- industrial waste and agriculture
- too much or too little water flow
- clearing of native plants
- concreting the waterway catchment area

Improving waterway health

Wastewater overflow abatement: Since 1998, we have invested about \$100 million a year to reduce the frequency of wastewater overflows into waterways. Stormwater entering the wastewater system leads to overflows during heavy rain. Blockages in the wastewater system can cause overflows in dry weather.

We are working on projects to minimise the environmental impacts of wastewater overflows into our waterways.

Naturalisation, restoration, rehabilitation and bush regeneration: We are returning creeks to a more natural state and planting native vegetation to improve the environment. This helps the waterway's natural ability to cope with issues like sediment, nutrients and high water flows.

Stormwater Quality Improvement Devices: We install and maintain devices on our stormwater assets that trap pollutants flowing from urban areas. Pollutants are 'trapped' in chambers that are emptied regularly.

Sydney Water owns over 60 of these. Each year, these devices prevent 8,000 cubic metres, or nearly 30,000 large wheelie bins of sediment and litter from entering waterways.

Collaboration: We work hand in hand with the community, as well as business, industry, state government and local councils to find solutions to better manage and protect our waterways.

We provide advice and direction on best practice and oversee the design and implementation of waterway projects.



Pollution traps like this trash rack helped prevent 8,000 cubic metres of rubbish from entering our waterways.



Sydney Water replaced deteriorated concrete channel in the Cooks River to improve waterway health.



We're reducing flood risk to properties and restoring local creeks and waterways in north west Sydney.

Contact us

To know more, contact the Land & Waterways team at stormwater@sydneywater.com.au, visit sydneywater.com.au or call us on 13 20 92.