

News Release

21 October 2016

EPA and councils 'Get the Site Right' at Parramatta River compliance blitz

On Tuesday 18 October, the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and eight local councils joined forces for a joint compliance blitz on soil erosion and sediment control at construction sites around the Parramatta River.

The blitz was part of the Parramatta River Catchment Group's 'Get the Site Right' initiative, which highlights the role that developers and builders play an important role in keeping the river clean and helping to make it swimmable again by 2025.

A total of 156 sites were inspected across the Parramatta River catchment, including areas within The Hills Shire, Blacktown, Parramatta, Cumberland, Ryde, Hunters Hill, Canada Bay and Burwood Council areas.

Nearly half (47%) of sites inspected were not being managed adequately. Offences ranged from no controls in place at all and unprotected dirt stockpiles in locations where they could be washed away, to minor offences such as ruptured sediment bags and inadequate sweeping of roads and driveways.

Developments of all sizes were targeted, with inspection sites ranging from small home renovations to major road developments.

Actions taken on the day depended on the severity of the offence and included prevention notices and fines to repeat offenders, verbal directions and formal warnings.

Offenders can be hit with fines of \$8,000 to \$15,000 per site for each incident and one developer in Parramatta received \$14,000 in fines for poor management of two sites, which resulted in the pollution of waters.

The blitz will continue throughout October with follow up inspections scheduled for sites already visited. Fines will be issued for sites that continue to be non-compliant.

The blitz has been timed in anticipation of a wet November, to ensure sediment is managed properly and does not flow off sites into stormwater pipes or creeks leading to the Parramatta River.

You can report pollution incidents by calling the Environment Line number 131 555. Further information at www.ourlivingriver.com.au.

Quotes:

NSW EPA Director of Metropolitan Branch Ms Giselle Howard said that erosion and sediment from construction sites poses a major threat to the river and environment, if not properly managed.

"We support development but we want it done right. With the rapid construction and development taking place around Parramatta River, sediment can run off building sites into stormwater drains and straight into the river," Ms Howard said.

"Sediment laden runoff can pollute the river with dirt, soil, sand and mud, which can in turn smother native plants and animals that live in these waterways. Eroded river and creek banks also destroy habitats, and stormwater drains blocked by sediment can lead to flooding and overflows.

“Developers are required by law to incorporate erosion and sediment prevention measures in their environment protection licences and to adhere to these requirements throughout the construction process. Non-compliance can lead to fines of up to \$15,000 for each incident.

“The NSW EPA is excited to be a part of the ‘Get the Site Right’ compliance taskforce; working with local councils to raise awareness with developers and the community about the effects of sediment laden runoff, and also taking regulatory action as required.”

PRCG Chair Clr Jerome Laxale said the compliance campaign reflects the changing landscape of the Parramatta River.

“As residential development replaces the old industrial sites along the river, there is increasing demand for a quality river where people can safely swim,” Clr Laxale said.

“‘Get the Site Right’ is a great example of how the member authorities of the PRCG are working together to protect the treasure that is the Parramatta River. We will be out in force in October patrolling sites and targeting offenders.

“The community also has a key role to play, by letting the EPA or local Council know if they see a site that doesn’t look right.”

Mayor, Helen McCaffrey, City of Canada Bay said that “Sediment run-off is a serious issue for our environment as it leads into the Parramatta River, having a detrimental effect to harm or kill aquatic plants and animals.”

“We recently investigated an incident where we were notified of sediment pollution travelling from a stormwater drain off Henley Marine Drive into the Parramatta River” she said.

“One of our Environmental Health Officers traced the run off back to the offending site, leading to a \$6,000 fine being issued to the offenders.”

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Photos, interviews and other media opportunities can be arranged. Please contact Sarah Clift for further details.

Get the Site Right is a joint taskforce between the Parramatta River Catchment Group, its member councils and the NSW Environment Protection Authority. We are working together to target developers and enforce best practice on building sites, to protect the Parramatta River and surrounding environments and continue on the positive path to making the river swimmable again.