

THEN. NOW. FUTURE.  
COOKS RIVER. OUR RIVER.



### OurRiver partners

- Ashfield Council
- Bankstown Council
- City of Canterbury
- Hurstville Council
- Marrickville Council
- Rockdale Council
- Strathfield Council
- City of Sydney

### In collaboration with

- NSW Environment Trust
- CooksRiverForeshoreWorkingGroup
- Monash University

### For more information

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### What you can do to help out:

- Join a local bushcare group
- Help ensure only water goes down the stormwater drain
- Conserve water (e.g., take shorter showers, use the water from washing dishes to water your plants, plant native drought-tolerant plants in your garden)
- Minimize how much water washes off your property (e.g., minimize paved areas, install a rainwater tank)
- Carry reusable drink containers and shopping bags – masses of plastic bags and bottles are washed into the river after each rain storm
- Tell council that a clean river is important to you
- Tell your friends what you're doing

### What councils are doing:

- Working together
- Eight councils are part of the Cooks River Foreshores Working Group.
- The CRFWG has initiated regional projects, most recently obtaining funding for *OurRiver* – the Cooks River Sustainability Initiative, which aims to improve river health, conserve water resources, and build the capacity of councils and the community.
- OurRiver has engaged approximately 3,000 residents
- produced 6 local management plans
- hosted community education tours and workshops
- helped construct 11 on-ground works to improve Cooks River water quality and conserve water resources.
- Supporting bushcare groups.
- Naturalising parts of the riverbanks with state (e.g., Sydney Water, DECCW) and federal partners.
- Monitoring the ecological health of the river through Riverscience and Streamwatch.
- Constructing on-ground works with state and federal partners that filter pollutants out of stormwater, conserve water, and/or slow the speed at which stormwater reaches the Cooks River.

## Then.

Over the last 200 years, the Cooks River Catchment has been densely developed and has been severely degraded by plant removal, concreting of the riverbed in many areas, and the use of the river as a drain for sewage, waste, and stormwater.

- 1780 Cooks River Catchment Aboriginal population approximately 1500
- 1830s Settlement spreads along the river as European population grows
- 1848 Noxious trades banned from Sydney, polluting industries move to the Cooks River
- 1850s - 1900s Industries, especially tanneries, dump waste into the river
- 1896 Outbreak of typhoid fever among children swimming in the river attributed to sewage from streets entering the river
- 1925 Cooks River Improvement League founded
- 1928 Government begins concreting upper reaches of the river
- 1950s Cooks River Valley Association formed
- 1991 State Government establishes the Cooks River Catchment Management Committee
- 1998 Formation of the Cooks River Foreshores Working Group
- 2000 State government disbands Catchment Management Committees; forms Catchment Management Boards instead, which cover larger areas
- 2005 State government disbands Catchment Management Boards; forms Catchment Management Authorities instead, which cover even larger areas
- 2007 Sydney Water investigates replacing sections of failing concrete with more natural river banks
- 2008 State government begins replacing failing steel sheet piling with more natural river banks
- 2010 Cooks River Catchment population approximately 500,000

## Now.

The parks and paths along the length of the Cooks River provide a unique recreation and potential habitat corridor in an urban setting. However, the Cooks River is polluted with very poor water quality. To try and change this – community groups, councils, and state and federal agencies have many projects to improve river health by removing rubbish, restoring riverbanks and bushland, filtering stormwater, etc.



## Future.

As a part of *OurRiver – the Cooks River Sustainability Initiative*, the residents, council staff and other stakeholders of six local areas developed visions for their area in 20 to 30 years time. Achieving these visions of attractive, safe, sustainable areas with a healthy natural environment is possible with the commitment of the community and political leaders to continue supporting efforts to improve river health.

“...the naturally flowing Cooks River supports a thriving ecosystem..”

Ashbury Subcatchment  
(Ashfield and Canterbury)

“We are leaders in sustainable practice and innovative design.”

Eastern Channel East Subcatchment  
(Marrickville)

“...our community understands how water works and plays an active role in its management.”

Munni Street Subcatchment (City of Sydney)

“...our parks and streets are safe, accessible and sustainable living spaces that connect the community and the environment.”

Rookwood Road Subcatchment  
(Bankstown)

“Industry and residents are sustainable water users who live in harmony with the environment.”

Strathfield South Subcatchment  
(Strathfield)

“...water and energy are generated locally from renewable sources.”

Upper Wolli Creek Subcatchment  
(Canterbury, Hurstville, Rockdale)