

ITEM MAYORAL MINUTE - CALL FOR SYDNEY WATER TO UPGRADE AGEING INFRASTRUCTURE

Author Initials: AT

REPORT

Our harbour front and waterways are the lifeblood of our City. The City of Canada Bay area is defined by the Parramatta River and Council is investing significant resources into making Parramatta River swimmable again; not only seeking to benefit our precious natural ecosystems but activating an underused resource for our area.

It is with concern that I draw Council's attention to the ongoing issue of Sydney Water's inadequate infrastructure resulting in significant contamination of the Parramatta River.

This issue was the focus of a Mayoral Minute raised on 15 March 2016 and was again raised at a Council meeting in August of 2018.

Since last raising my concerns, I have had multiple instances of significant raw sewage overflow in our area reported to me.

In the months since October 2018, the NSW Government's Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) has reported four instances of bacteria levels at Cabarita Beach and Chiswick Baths reaching levels at which there is an "increased risk of illness to bathers".

The OEH acknowledges that sewerage leaking and overflowing into local waterways is a major pollution problem and that most urban waterways contain dangerously high levels of sewerage contamination after rain.

It is recommended by OEH that swimming in estuarine areas be avoided for at least three (3) days after heavy rain. OEH Beachwatch notes that exposure to contaminated water can cause severe contagious infection.

The Sydney Water sewer system services the whole City of Canada Bay area, transporting waste to treatment plants. The operation of the system is controlled by a license issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Sewer systems need to be designed in a fail safe way to reduce the possibility of a blockage or overload causing an uncontrolled surcharge inside a dwelling or in another undesirable location. Hence relief structures (designed overflow points) are built into the system. There are an estimated 3,000 designed overflow points in Sydney Water's sewerage system and several hundred in our city.

While these designed overflow points are necessary for public health and safety it is obviously desirable to reduce overflows to an absolute minimum and it appears Sydney Water's current infrastructure is not able to ensure that is the case.

It is disappointing that the State Government has turned a blind eye to Sydney Water's ageing infrastructure in our area. The State Government is investing nearly a billion dollars into ANZ Stadium whilst raw sewage has pumped into the Parramatta River near Concord West just a stone's throw away.

It is vital that our local infrastructure keeps pace with our growing population.

The City of Canada Bay once again calls on Sydney Water and the NSW Government to present our community with a road map for improvement. Recent heavy rainfall has once again highlighted the necessity to bring this issue to a head.

The NSW Government and Sydney Water need to do take urgent steps to ensure that we can realise our goal of a clean, swimmable Parramatta River.

RECOMMENDATION

1. THAT the Mayor write to Sydney Water requesting data on the number of raw sewage overflow incidents in the City of Canada Bay LGA over a period of 24 months to February 19, 2019.
2. THAT Sydney Water divert funds received from the recent sale of the Drummoyne Reservoir to infrastructure improvements in the City of Canada Bay LGA.
3. THAT the Mayor write to the Minister for Lands and Water and the State Member calling for urgent attention to the issue of sewage overflows in our area and seeking support for the renewal of Sydney Water's ageing infrastructure in the City of Canada Bay.