



MEDIA RELEASE
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Builders urged to contain site litter and construction waste

With the construction industry generating more than 12 million tonnes of waste per annum, this year's Get the Site Right campaign is reminding builders and developers that they have a critical role to play in reducing environmental impacts on waterways in NSW.

Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that in 2020 construction activities generated the second largest amount of solid waste in Australia, behind manufacturing.¹

While much of this waste is produced by construction and demolition activities, a considerable amount comes from building supply packaging materials and food and drink containers.

NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) A/Executive Director Regulatory Operations Arminda Ryan said poorly managed construction waste can have serious environmental impacts.

"Incorrectly contained waste can be blown or washed off sites, blocking stormwater infrastructure and impacting our creeks, rivers and harbours," Ms. Ryan said.

"Plastic litter, soil and other waste carried off building sites can cause harm to aquatic life, contribute to flooding and algal growth and increase human health risks in foreshore areas.

"Correctly disposing of litter and waste and putting robust erosion and sediment controls in place not only prevents these risks but is a vital way to meet the NSW EPA's litter reduction targets²."

Parramatta River Catchment Group Chair, Cr Mark Drury, said that the plan to open four more swimming and recreational sites on the Parramatta River over the next few years was dependent on continued efforts to improve water quality.

"In addition to sediment runoff, litter from building sites that enters local waterways can impede our ability to achieve a clean, safe and swimmable river," Cr Drury said.

"Get the Site Right remains an important part of our ongoing strategy to manage the environmental impacts of construction on waterway health.

"The construction industry has an important role to play in reducing the amount of litter and waste generated on sites and protecting waterways by adopting sustainable resources and building practices."

Builders and developers are required to correctly contain and dispose of litter and other waste as part of a waste management plan for their site, in addition to their comprehensive erosion and sediment control plans.

Failing to put these protections in place can attract fines ranging from \$8,000 to \$15,000 per offence under the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* or the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.



Get the Site Right is a joint taskforce between the Cooks River Alliance, Georges Riverkeeper, Parramatta River Catchment Group, Sydney Coastal Councils Group, local councils, Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), and WaterNSW.

The campaign will run throughout May with more than 20 councils participating in a one-day inspection blitz of construction sites on Thursday, 18 May 2023. A follow-up inspection blitz week will be held in October 2023.

Members of the public are encouraged to report pollution incidents, including poor sediment control, to their local council or the EPA's 24-hour Environment Line on 131 555.

¹<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/environment/environmental-management/waste-account-australia-experimental-estimates/latest-release>

²<https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/environment-energy-and-science/plastics-action-plan>

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Note to Editors:

Images available on request.

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