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Reference: 006-25 SJ

Wednesday, 9 April 2025

The Hon. Ryan Park MP
Minister for Health
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001
By email

Dear Minister,

Re: Urgency surrounding the future of the NSW Beachwatch program and public safety

The Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG) writes to you to express concern regarding the future of the [NSW Government's Beachwatch program](#) and to seek your support.

The NSW Beachwatch program is at significant risk of ending at most Sydney beaches from the 1 July 2025. We believe that this will put the public's health at significant risk as they will no longer be able to rely on Beachwatch to determine whether a swim site is safe to swim at.

What's changing?

In December 2023, the NSW Government advised Sydney councils that they would now need to fund the Beachwatch program or risk losing water quality monitoring in their Local Government Areas. The SCCG and its member councils have strongly opposed this cost shifting from State to Local Government and have reminded the NSW Government that Councils in the Sydney region are not legally responsible for monitoring water quality beyond the mean high-water mark. This has been confirmed by the Office of Local Government and SCCG's own independent legal advice.

Moreover, independent expert advice has confirmed that poor Beachwatch ratings in Sydney are primarily caused by sewage contamination – a responsibility of Sydney Water, not Sydney councils. Yet Sydney Water has not been asked to financially contribute. See the SCCG's letter to the Minister for the Environment [here](#) which details these concerns.

Most Councils in Sydney are pushing back. Consequently, Beachwatch monitoring across many Sydney beaches is likely to cease from 1 July 2025.

Why does this matter?

Discontinuing the NSW Government's Beachwatch Program would remove an essential source of public health information about water quality and beach safety. Sydney's beaches are among the most popular in Australia, attracting millions of visitors each year as well as being regularly used by Sydney residents. A 2017 analysis report by Sydney Water found the total value of beach use and access for Sydney residents is estimated at around \$1.2 billion per annum, based on estimates of an



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individual's value of time, with \$94 million of this attributable to beach water quality¹.

Without this program, the community may not have access to reliable data on when and where it is safe to swim, increasing health risks and undermining public confidence in beach water quality.

Councils also highly value this long-term monitoring program particularly as the State prepares an annual [State of the Beaches report](#) and this information assists in prioritising areas where infrastructure upgrades are needed such as advocating to Sydney Water for sewer leaks to be fixed.

The SCCG has been actively advocating for Beachwatch to remain a state-funded program. It recently issued a [media release](#) and was interviewed by [Channel 9 News](#). However, the NSW Government has yet to provide a response to our concerns.

What can you do?

Given the importance of the Beachwatch program to the health of the NSW public and the need to ensure transparency around the safety of our beaches, we urge you to support our advocacy. We would greatly support you contacting the Minister for the Environment and calling on the Minister to:

- retain Beachwatch as a state-funded program
- engage in meaningful consultation with coastal stakeholders to find a sustainable, long-term solution to water quality monitoring.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at sarah@sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au for any further information.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Penny Joyce
Executive Director

¹ Nelson, N. & Mountford, M. "[Putting a value on cleaner beaches in Sydney.](https://doi.org/10.21139/wej.2017.039)" *Water E-Journal*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2017, pp. 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.21139/wej.2017.039>.



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