

SYDNEY COASTAL COUNCILS GROUP Inc.
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Reference: 010-25 SJ

Monday, 14 April 2025

Mr Adam Gilligan
Director of Operations at the EPA
NSW Environment Protection Authority
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

info@epa.nsw.gov.au

Re: Debris Balls affecting Sydney Beaches during 2024/25 Summer period

Dear Mr Gilligan,

I write to you on behalf of the Sydney Coastal Council Group (SCCG) members concerning recent investigations by the EPA to determine the source of pollution incidents across Sydney beaches during the recent Summer period.

A total of 22 beaches in the Sydney region were affected from October 2024 to January 2025 with many of these beaches having to be closed due to public health concerns. The EPA's thorough investigations in this matter are greatly appreciated and the recent announcement that the source has been found is welcomed. Our Councils have been advised by Sydney Water that its network or facilities are the most probable source.

We would like to raise with you several concerns raised by our members that they experienced during the notification, reporting and management of these incidents. These included:

- a lack of clarity around the process for closing and opening beaches and who is responsible for this
- a lack of oversight by one lead agency managing the entire process particularly when the source of the incidents is initially unknown.
- confusion over the reporting of incidents to the community and its linkages to the NSW Beachwatch program
- the significant cleanup costs having to be borne initially by Councils and who will lead future clean-up efforts where a source is not initially identified.

The SCCG's General Manager's Forum has discussed the issues raised by members and believes that a workshop with relevant stakeholders to discuss the issues and identify solutions to improve the management of future incidents would be highly beneficial. We believe relevant stakeholders should include EPA, Sydney Water, DCCEE and affected Councils. Sydney Water and affected Councils have already committed to attending this workshop.



northern
beaches
council



INNER WEST



Bayside Council



If you agree to the EPA being in attendance, would you please contact me via email (sarah@sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au) identifying a key contact and we will proceed with organising this important event.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Joyce', written in dark ink.

Sarah Penny Joyce
Executive Director