



**Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society Inc.**  
Protecting the local environment since 1955

Manager Metropolitan Infrastructure  
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Review of Sydney Water Corporation's Environment Protection Licences for Sewage Treatment

Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society Inc (OFF) would like to comment on the above review, in particular licence number 371, Southern Suburbs.

The Georges River North Sub-main (NGRS) discharged a large amount of sewage into the Lime Kiln Bay Wetlands in March 2012, necessitating a large scale clean up by Sydney Water. This discharge was exacerbated by a failure of the Emergency Relief Structure (ERS) and was rectified by Sydney Water.

However, since that time members of the local community have recorded a large number of wet weather overflows from this discharge point. Again, Sydney Water, after a local outcry and to its credit, have completed work on this discharge point to reduce outflows into the wetlands by increasing the volume stored in the sub-main. But, we are now concerned that much of the sewage previously discharging into the wetlands will now be discharged from other relief structures causing increased problems at those points.

Prior to the work on the wetlands outlet, from 2012 to April 2015 there were approximately 8.8 spills per year (extrapolating to roughly 80 per 10 years). This far exceeds Sydney Water's existing EPA licence which we believe allows it to have 40 overflows per 10 years. This should be reduced by the above-mentioned works, but we ask why the Georges River should be subjected to even 40 spills in 10 years from any of the 700 or so ERSs on this important river. We understand that the frequency of wet weather overflows for licence number 1784 (northern beaches of Sydney) must not exceed 31 overflows per year. We cannot see why the Georges River should be subjected to a higher level of overflows than other areas of Sydney. Even 31 would be too high.

We would like to see the number of overflows at all ERSs reduced significantly and would urge the EPA to adopt a licence policy which will require Sydney Water to pursue a long-term plan of significantly reducing both the quantity of sewage discharged and the number of outlets. We realise that there has to be a method of avoiding discharges into customers premises, but we contend that this should not be at the over-reliance of polluting our natural environment.



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One method we would suggest Sydney Water could use to achieve this would be to adopt a process of reducing infiltration into the sewage reticulation system to divert wet weather flows away from the pipework in the system. This would help reduce the problem at its source.

The predecessors of Sydney Water showed great foresight when they constructed the NGRS back in the 1940s. This structure has served us well for over 70 years, but with increasing population it now caters for a vastly increased volume of sewage. Perhaps now is the time to start planning for the next 70 years, when we should be looking forward to improving the quality of our environment, in this case our precious waterways.

We should always be striving for improvement, not just accepting the status quo. Therefore we contend that the conditions on licence number 371 should be tightened considerably.

Regards

Graham Lalchere

President

Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society Inc.