



Australian Government

Australia's National Programme of
Action for the Protection of the Marine
Environment from Land-Based Activities

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case study 13: hornsby shire, new south wales

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introduction

The Hornsby Shire is a local government, which is part of the greater urban area of Sydney. Most of the catchments in the Shire drain into the Hawkesbury River and Estuary system that is an important natural and recreational area for north Sydney.

Hornsby Shire Council has a history of engagement in environmental and sustainability issues. In 1989 it established a community Bushcare program with nine groups. That program now has 183 groups and more than 927 registered volunteers. It established a local Agenda 21 Committee for implementation of relevant outcomes of the 1992 Earth Summit. It was one of the first councils in New South Wales to introduce an 'environmental levy' or Catchment Remediation Rate to improve water quality across the Shire. It is now one of the 79 local government members of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Water Campaign™ and among these, one of only 2 councils to have achieved Milestone 4. Hornsby Council is the only council that has achieved both the Corporate and Community modules of Milestone 4 of the Water Campaign™ in Australia – Implementing the Water Actions Plan and Quantifying the Benefits.

pollution issues

The upper reaches of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River system have a total of 81 barriers, including dams and weirs of major dams. In periods of drought the section to Wiseman's Ferry, just to the north of Hornsby Shire, can be affected by nutrient build-up and algal blooms. Flows are greater below Wiseman's Ferry but minimizing discharges or run-off of nutrients in the lower catchment sections is important to the environmental health of the lower Hawkesbury system.

management context

Hornsby Shire is one of 22 local governments with drainage areas in the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment. Most of the catchments in the shire drain into the Hawkesbury River and thus to the estuary which is an important natural and recreational area for Greater Sydney. Hornsby Shire Council is a member of the Local Government Advisory Group of the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Authority and receives funding from the Authority for catchment health projects.

The management framework within Hornsby Shire includes a water management plan developed in accordance with the Water Campaign™ of the ICLEI. The completion of the plan and its subsequent implementation are recognised as achieving Milestone 4 of the Campaign.

point source pollution issues

The Water Quality Management Plan includes controlling pollutant load discharges from Sydney Water Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) and reducing household, industrial and commercial water use to reduce pressure on STPs. Actions being investigated under the plan include developing sewage treatment plant water re-use strategies for irrigation of parks and gardens and consequent reductions of nutrient loads reaching waterways.

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Diffuse Source Pollution Issues

Stormwater runoff is a major issue addressed in the Hornsby Shire Water Quality Management Plan. Substantial areas of significant bushland are protected in National Parks, Nature Reserves or Regional Parks, but runoff from urban areas, transport corridors and from agricultural areas are still issues for Hornsby Shire. The Water Quality Management Plan identifies actions to address stormwater including capital works, introduction of water sensitive urban design requirements in development approval processes and public education - on water use, waste reduction and litter control.