

Stormwater

Our role in managing floods

Together with your local Council and other government agencies, Sydney Water manages stormwater to improve the environment while protecting people and property.

What is stormwater?

Stormwater is runoff from rain that falls on roofs, roads, and open spaces. This runoff flows into street drains owned by local councils and then into much larger pipes or channels called 'trunk drains' which make their way to creeks, rivers, lakes and the ocean.



Ownership and management of waterways is split between Sydney Water, private land owners, local councils, and other state government agencies.

Our role in stormwater

Our stormwater catchments are spread across 300 square kilometres, over 15% of Sydney's urban area. We own over 440 kilometres of stormwater pipes, culverts, and channels.

Councils play the lead role in flood risk management for local communities. Even in the areas that Sydney Water owns the larger trunk system, councils own and manage the smaller stormwater drains.

Our stormwater assets eventually drain into Sydney's major waterways including the Parramatta, Cooks and Georges Rivers, Sydney Harbour, and Botany Bay. A map of Sydney Water's stormwater catchment areas is available at sydneywater.com.au.

Flooding in Sydney

Heavy or prolonged rain can cause creeks and coastal rivers to rise quickly. It can take only minutes for waterways to pose a major flood hazard. Fast-moving floodwaters in populated areas are a serious risk to life and property.

Flash floods are the most dangerous type of flood and result from short, extremely intense bursts of rain. They often occur in heavily populated areas with little to no warning.

In contrast, Sydney's inland rivers generally flood slowly, usually taking weeks and months to fully develop. This can lead to major property damage and isolation of entire communities.



Floods are Australia's most costly and predictable natural disaster.

This difference in flood timing is caused by:

- soil type
- storm duration and intensity
- topography (or landscape)
- land use and development (hard surfaces increase run off speed in urban areas).

What we do to manage flooding

Our stormwater assets are located across the majority of local council areas in Sydney and we work closely with these councils to reduce flooding impacts on our community.

We also offer our expertise in stormwater catchments outside our areas of responsibility.

We manage flooding in the following ways:

Protecting stormwater assets: We protect our stormwater assets so they work as intended. We regularly check the structure and operation of our assets and maintain or renew them. This is a key part of how we manage flooding.

Assessing development applications: Sydney Water assesses all development applications near our stormwater assets.

Sometimes, proposed developments can be impacted by flooding, or can pose a flood risk to others. If this happens, the developer needs to propose alternative designs and consult with local Council and Sydney Water.

Participating in Floodplain Risk Management Committees: We participate in Floodplain Risk Management Committees with local councils, communities and other agencies, as outlined in the NSW government Floodplain Development Manual. A copy of the manual can be found at environment.nsw.gov.au.

These committees oversee the preparation of the following:

- **flood study** to identify and quantify local flooding
- **floodplain risk management study** to assess the options to address flooding
- **floodplain risk management plan** to prioritise work on either Council or Sydney Water's stormwater assets to reduce flooding.

Collaborating with local Councils in Sydney:

We play an active role in the stormwater industry by hosting workshops with councils and participating in many council and community events to address flooding.

We contribute by sharing our knowledge, offering advice and discussing proposed modifications to the stormwater system.



We host regular workshops with councils as part of developing strategies and sharing knowledge for managing stormwater.

Contact us

To know more, contact us by email at stormwater@sydneywater.com.au, visit sydneywater.com.au or call us on 13 20 92.