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NEW WESTERN SYDNEY SWIM SPOTS SPARK AQUATIC WEED WARNING

As new swimming spots open across the region, Western Sydney Weeds Authority (WSWA) warns residents to be vigilant in keeping local waterways free from invasive aquatic weeds as record numbers of people take to the water this summer.

With proposals for up to 20 new river swimming locations across Western Sydney by 2030, recreational opportunities across the region could expand significantly. Penrith Beach ('Pondi') has already attracted almost 450,000 visits since opening in December 2023, while government-funded improvements to waterway access at Macquarie Park in Hawkesbury highlight the growing demand for accessible recreational waterways.

With more residents expected to enjoy these swimming spots, WSWA warns that increased recreational activity makes it even more important to maintain a strict approach to biosecurity to prevent the spread of invasive aquatic weeds.

"With Western Sydney experiencing some of the hottest summer temperatures in NSW, having more opportunities to swim and cool off in our local waterways is fantastic for the community. However, we need to ensure these waterways remain healthy, weed-free and accessible for generations to come," said WSWA's General Manager, Chris Dewhurst.

"As thousands more people take to our waters in Western Sydney, preventing the spread of aquatic weeds becomes even more critical. Dense weed infestations can pose serious risks to swimmers by entangling them or concealing underwater hazards, which is why everyone has a role to play in keeping our rivers safe and accessible," said Mr Dewhurst.

According to WSWA, increased kayaking and boating activity in summer can create more opportunities for invasive aquatic weeds to spread between waterways. Boat propellers, anchors and recreational equipment can break weeds into small fragments, transporting them to new locations and establishing infestations.

Invasive aquatic weeds can form dense mats across waterways, displace native vegetation and disrupt aquatic ecosystems. Severe infestations can also restrict recreational activities, potentially threatening the continued use of popular swimming, boating and fishing locations.

WSWA says that priority weeds including frogbit, salvinia, water hyacinth and alligator weed are particularly concerning as they can spread rapidly and are difficult to eradicate once established.

"Aquatic weeds can spread rapidly, threatening the environment and making our waterways more dangerous to enjoy. Simple steps like cleaning recreational equipment and removing plant matter can make a real difference in preventing infestations," Mr Dewhurst said.

WSWA is urging residents to take simple preventative measures before and after visiting local waterways, particularly when moving boats and recreational equipment between locations.

WSWA's Guide to Keeping Our Rivers Weed-Free

To prevent the spread of aquatic weeds, follow these four simple steps:

1. ***DRAIN** all water from your trailer and boat.*
2. ***FLUSH** outboard motors, trailers, vehicles, equipment and shoes with clean water.*
3. ***REMOVE** any visible plant matter and place it in a general waste bin.*
4. ***DRY** your boat and equipment thoroughly before taking it to the next location.*

Swimmers should never step onto floating green mats and should avoid waterways showing heavy weed infestations or visible algal growth. Residents should also check local water-quality warnings before swimming, particularly after heavy rainfall.

WSWA manages priority weeds across Hawkesbury, Penrith, Blacktown and The Hills Shire LGAs. Residents can report suspected aquatic weeds and access prevention advice at wswa.nsw.gov.au or by calling (02) 4574 9600.

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