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Minister for Environment and Heritage

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MEDIA RELEASE

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A CLEANER SYDNEY HARBOUR USING AI TECHNOLOGY

For the first time, key waterways in Sydney Harbour will be equipped with innovative technologies to help reduce the amount of rubbish polluting the Harbour, thanks to the new Smarter, Cleaner Sydney Harbour initiative co-funded by the NSW Liberal and Nationals Government.

Minister for Environment James Griffin said the pilot program is using cutting-edge science and technology to protect one of Australia's most iconic environments by preventing rubbish from making its way into the Harbour.

"Sydney Harbour isn't just the world-famous jewel in Sydney's crown, it's an important ecosystem that supports abundant marine life such as seals, seahorses and little penguins, which will be even better supported thanks to this initiative," Mr Griffin said.

"Through the Smarter, Cleaner Sydney Harbour project, we're investing in technology that will keep our Harbour cleaner and create healthier ecosystems by using cameras and sensors to monitor litter moving along estuaries and creeks in real time.

"Through this initiative, almost 80 sensors will be fitted to traps on local waterways to alert councils and government authorities in real time when they need emptying, helping them remove litter before it reaches the Harbour.

"This initiative complements our $9.1 million Seabirds to Seascapes project, which is helping restore Sydney Harbour by replanting seagrass meadows, installing hundreds of Living Seawall panels, supporting fur seals and little penguins."

The Smarter, Cleaner Sydney Harbour project will help reduce the 3,500 cubic metres of litter currently entering Sydney Harbour, equivalent to about 44,000 wheelie bins.

Cameras will be fitted to bridges along key waterways, including throughout Sydney Olympic Park, and will detect litter in the water using advanced analytics and artificial intelligence, detecting build up in gross pollutant traps.

Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government Victor Dominello said the initiative will help authorities proactively manage waterway health, making maintenance more efficient, timely and cost effective.

"AI software will be used to identify the types of litter floating in the water – distinguishing between a chip packet, a bottle and can," Mr Dominello said.

"This data will help water authorities work out where the litter hot spots are and how to better target litter prevention activities.

"At the end of the trial we will assess its success with a view to the technology being rolled out across the Greater Sydney region to be used by all councils who manage stormwater networks."

The Smarter, Cleaner Sydney Harbour pilot is a collaboration between Sydney Olympic Park Authority, Sydney Coastal Council Group Inc, Australia's national science agency CSIRO, Parramatta River Catchment Group, and is co-funded by the NSW Government.

The pilot received a $545,000 co-contribution from the $47.5 million Smart Places Acceleration Program, part of the NSW Liberal and Nationals Government's Digital Restart Fund.

For more information, visit https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/industry/cities-and-active-transport/smart-places

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